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THE

MYSTERY OF GOD

AND THE

UNIVERSE

OR THE PHILOSOPHY OF

The Abstract and the Concrete

(निर्गुण सगुण निरूपण)

BY

PRABHU LAL

Of His Highness the Nizam's Service.

श्लोकार्धेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं ग्रन्थकोटिभिः ।
ब्रह्मसत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवोब्रह्मैव नापरः ।।

I say in half a Sloka what has been described in millions of books The Absolute is the only Reality, and the world is an Illusion, the individual Soul being in essence the Absolute only and not separate from it.

TO THE SACRED MEMORY

OF

THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

WHOSE WRITINGS AND UTTERANCES

have mostly inspired the thoughts of the writer

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED

IN TOKEN OF

his deep reverence for him as one of
the greatest modern teachers of the VEDANTA
by his ever-loving disciple and admirer

THE AUTHOR

PREFACE.

As all this or at least a major part of it has oozed out of my mind, as the result of an agitation produced in it after reading a Vedantic work, the contents of which did not appear to me strictly in accord with the teachings of the Vedanta, and as no attempt was made to refer to the standard works on the subject for verification of the conclusions arrived at by me, and lastly as I do not pretend to be a good English writer, I trust that any inaccuracies of thought and language will generously be overlooked by the reader.

HYDERABAD DECCAN,
20th February, 1913.

PRABHULAL.

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ओं तत् सत्

Salutations to the Ultimate Reality.

I.—INTRODUCTION.

This treatise is intended to sing, not in verse but in prose, the glories of the *Atman*, and of the Lord Sri Krishna the grandest and loveliest of all the Concrete and Divine Manifestations of the *Atman*, also called the Absolute *Brahman*. That there is and there can be only one Abstract Reality which is the Ultimate Truth and which is the only reasonable solution of the Mystery of God and the Universe, cannot be denied, yet nevertheless, to reach that Reality or the Abstract God, the easiest course is to resort for help and also for guidance, to certain Concrete Manifestations of the said Reality—Manifestations that have in truth their existence entirely in our ignorance respecting the Reality, but which, however, can be taken to all intents and purposes, to have at least a Relative Reality, as long as that ignorance lasts. From the beginningless past there have been fights and often severe fights over the question, whether God is Impersonal or Personal, each school of thought defending itself against the other by torturing the Vedic texts, in order to interpret them in the light of its own particular phase of thought. There have, consequently, arisen a number of schools amongst which the leading are the *Advaita* or non-Dualistic and the *Dwaita* or Dualistic schools. An attempt is being made in this treatise, to harmonize the teachings of both the schools, and to show that though the ultimate conclusions arrived at by the non-Dualistic School are alone true in the light of the Vedic texts, as well as of reason, yet nevertheless, there can be no reasonable ground for rejecting entirely the conclu-

sions reached by the other School, which certainly embody lesser and lower truths only. I have tried to reconcile the *Bhakti Marga* or the path of love to the teachings of the *Advaita Vedanta*, and I think, I have been able to prove that this particular path which has been considered as inculcating dualistic thoughts only, can rightly and reasonably be explained from the *Advaita* standpoint only. Men treading this path can attain Realization equally with those who prefer the *Jnana Marga* or the path of knowledge; and certainly the former is far easier and is attended with less difficulties than is the case with the latter wherein the difficulties that have to be faced are almost insurmountable.

Leaving aside questions regarding God and His attributes, the universe as manifested presents certain riddles that can be rightly solved by a belief in the Abstract Reality as being the substratum of all Phenomena, and not otherwise. The Abstract is infinite, while the Concrete is finite, but an infinity being always beyond grasp by human reason, a recourse must be had to the Finite and the Concrete only for comprehending it That in reality, the Abstract alone is true and not the Concrete which has an illusory existence only, is the conclusion arrived at in this treatise, but though the abstract Reality is realizable in what is called the supersensuous state, it is entirely beyond the grasp of ordinary human intellect; and therefore in order to reach it intellectually, recourse must be had to the illusiory concrete objects.

The *Vedanta* preaches harmony and universal toleration among all sects, nay among all the religions of the world, and therefore, if my humble efforts in presenting this volume to the public, prove to be of any help in furthering that object, I think I am fully recompensed for my pain and trouble, and that is what I seek at the hands of the public. I myself cannot boast of even an attempt to Realization, being still very far from it, as I am yet subject to all sorts of weaknesses that prey upon my heart. In fact, this is a goal which is attained through the Grace of

the Lord only, and not by reading books, though millions may be written, which serve only to draw the attention of the reader to the subject and to enlighten him as to the ways and means of attaining the goal. I conclude this with the words of Tulsi Das who says :—

"The nectar of the eternal Bliss is ever flowing in our hearts, and is therefore, always available to give us immortality ; but woe to us ! we are thinking under an hallucination that apparently has no end, that we have lost it, as if for ever, and therefore, we are under the thraldom of death. Instead of milk we have been churning water all our lives, in order to obtain butter which is however not present in it at all."

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति

That which exists is One, Sages call It variously.

II.—THE MYSTERY AND ITS SOLUTION.

1. From limitless past the question is being asked, whether God is Impersonal or Personal, whether He has a body or is bodiless, whether He is one or many and finally whether He is separate from His creation or one with it, or in other words, whether the Universe exists in Him or is separate from Him. This mystery of God and the Universe has presented itself for solution in every age, and every time, attempts have been made to solve it by the several Religions as well as by eminent thinkers, each in its or his own light, considering the solution arrived at, as conclusive and final. There is already a flood of thought all over the world, which is continuously increasing, because the stream of thought is flowing perenially, and so we cannot say which is the last current of it. Consequently, a conclusive and final solution of the riddle is impossible, as long as man is a thinking and reasoning being, demanding reasons for every solution that may be offered. Still the conclusions arrived at by the *Vedanta*, may be considered as the most logical and reasonable, affording a greater consolation and solace than the rest. Besides, its conclusions are being now endorsed by the views of the latest modern thinkers; as for instance, the *Vedantic* conception of the one Reality only existing amidst all this diversity, and of that Reality being the only one substratum of all these apparent Phenomena, or in other words, of the unity of all existences, is a thought to which science too is now gradually reaching. The writings of Emerson and several other authors, are breathing of pure *Vedanta* which has also influenced the thought of some of the German

Philosophers. The Christian Missionaries too are now interpreting the Bible in the light of the *Vedanta*.

An attempt is being made in this small treatise to state briefly what those conclusions of the *Vedanta* are, which so eminently render it fit to be called the pinnacle of all thought that has as yet had an expression from time immemorial.

2. It may be stated that there have been various conceptions from very early times as regards the existence of God and the universe, which may be classed into three main divisions as follows:—

(1) Belief in the existence of one substance only—Spirit or Matter ;

(2) Belief in the existence of two substances—Spirit and Matter both;

(3) No substance, neither Spirit nor Matter, but ever changing Sensations, Perceptions and Ideas only.

Class I includes beliefs in the exclusive existence either of the Spirit or of the Matter. The latter thought is represented by the materialistic schools of the present age, believing in the eternity of Matter with the ever-changing properties adhering to it. They utterly deny the existence of God, Impersonal or Personal. The former thought is represented by the *Adwaita Vedanta* of India, believing in the absolute existence of the Spirit only.

The most prominent representatives of the third class of thought are the Buddhists who believe in the constantly changing Phenomena or properties, or more correctly speaking, Perceptions only, without any substratum to them. They too have no belief in the existence of God, Impersonal or Personal.

3. Class II represents dualistic thoughts prevalent in almost all the quarters of the Globe, the most ancient of which is the Sankhya System of India, believing in the real existence of the spirit and matter both, called *Purusha* and *Prakriti* respectively, *Purusha* being many and not

one. *Prakriti* is the sole actor, which when manifested is called *Vyakta* and when unmanifested *Avyakta*. This *Prakriti* is self-evolving and self-involving, unacted by the *Purusha* or any being in the form of a Creator, and so there is no belief of a Creator or God in this system. One school of this thought represented by Judaism, believes in the existence of one God only, existing at all times, while the other entities, such as souls and matter, being His creations, have their existence entirely dependent on His will, being created at His will and destroyed at His will. But both these entities are said to have a real existence. According to this belief, God is separate from His creation, but is present everywhere, by which is meant that through His omniscience, He is able to see and know whatever is passing in His creation; and thus, He may be considered as Omnipresent, though not in the sense that He is actually pervading throughout matter and soul.

There are schools of Dualists and Qualified Monists in India, who believe in the eternal separation of God from matter and soul. Among them is the school of the Qualified Monists (*Visistadwaits*), followers of Ramanujacharya, believing in the eternal existence of three substances permanently separate from one another, viz. (1) an infinite number of souls, (2) matter which is infinity, and (3) God who is infinite and interpenetrating the other two, the two former thus forming as if the body of God. At the time of Pralaya or Involution, this universe consisting of souls and matter, becomes latent or passes into a potential state in the body of God, and thus at that time there is one existence of God only. In this sense only, this doctrine is called *Visistadwaita* i.e. the unity differentiated into three entities. At the time of creation, the universe is again evolved, manifesting itself as three separate entities of soul, matter and God, the last interpenetrating the remaining two all the while.

4. Now the idea of a number of substances co-existing eternally is opposed to reason. All the arguments that

have been brought against the existence of the Personal God, point to the impossibility and absurdity of an eternal and infinite Being existing separately from His creation or other objects co-existing with Him eternally. If He is immanent or interpenetrating other substances co-existing with Him eternally, or if He is not immanent but exists apart from His creation, then in both these cases, there is the absurdity of an infinite existence being limited or covered by other substances which too are said to have a real entity. The only reply to the above objection is that God being spirit, can unlike matter pervade or interpenetrate matter and spirit both, without effecting His infinity. But this too is inconceivable, as it would be saying that a number of eternally or really existing substances which, according to one theory, are also infinite by themselves, do occupy one and the same space without displacing one another, implying thereby the co-existence of a number of infinities overlapping one another.

5. Now there is the *Adwaita* School of the *Vedanta*. According to this school, there is only one existence, that of *Brahman* or God Impersonal or what is now scientifically called the Absolute. That only is said to have an absolute reality which has its existence at all times, past, present and future. In this sense, the Absolute alone has a real existence. This Absolute is without attributes, *i.e.*, it is desireless, actionless and unchangeable. So the idea of the existence of any desire in the Absolute for a creation of or of the Absolute itself being changed into a universe is impossible. It is pure *sat*, *chit* and *ananda* only, *i.e.*, the Existence, Knowledge and Bliss absolute.

Now a thing which exists at one time and is non-existing at another, cannot be said to have a real or absolute existence. Such an exisitence is said to be illusory or what is technically called an Appearance or a Phenomenon. When the existence of the Absolute is once admitted, and this has been admitted by the latest

leader of thought, Mr. Herbert Spencer, it alone can be said to have a real existence. There can be no idea of time, space and causation in the Absolute, and therefore nothing can come out from it. But the Phenomenal world is perceived by our senses, and to all intents and purposes, it appears to have a real existence. Now the question is, whence has this Phenomenal world come out ? It cannot be said to have proceeded from the Absolute,for in that case the Absolute will become Relative. It cannot be said to be existing eternally side by side with the Absolute, for in that case, the reality of two things will be implied, while reasonably and logically, the reality of one thing only can be proved. What is called *Sat* or Ultimate Truth can be one only So the Phenomenal world has no reality in the above sense of the word. According to the *Vedanta*, it completely disappears in the state of realization of the Absolute, when it is absolutely non-existing. But as it is perceived in the state of ignorance about the Absolute, its existence cannot be entirely denied, though its apparent or phenomenal existence too, is due to its having the Absolute for its substratum, without which its existence could not have been even perceived. The simile of the snake in the rope is usually quoted in illustration of this argument. The illusory snake does not come out from the rope, but at the same time, its illusory appearance is due to the rope only, the illusion being caused by the rope and the snake produced by that illusion. As long as there is illusion, the snake only exists and not the rope, but when the illusion is destroyed by the knowledge of the real object, the rope alone exists and not the snake. Similarly, when the truth of the existence of the Absolute is realized, there is no world and when we perceive the world in the state of ignorance about the Absolute, then there is no realization of the Absolute. Thus granting the existence of an Absolute, there is no escape from accepting Sankara's theory of Maya for an explanation of the world. There is a general misconception about

the *Vedanta*, that it regards the world as absolutely non-existing. It never says so. In the relative sense, as long as there is no realization of the Absolute, the world has a positive existence, in the same way as one believes in the reality of his own existence and so long as there is such a belief, the world exists too and quite really.

6. In short, it may be said that the existence of this world is due to our ignorance regarding the exclusive reality of the Absolute, or in other words, to our having not realized the Absolute. When Herbert Spencer says that the Absolute is unknowable, then he too clearly admits of our utter ignorance regarding it. He believes this ignorance to be permanent and eternal, as in his opinion the Absolute can never be known. Any how, there cannot be any doubt about the existence of the ignorance regarding the Absolute, whether from the standpoint of Old or New thought. In our idea, however, this ignorance is not permanent, but has an end by the true knowledge of the Absolute, or as it is technically called, by its realization in what is called the state of God Consciousness.

By saying that the Absolute is unknowable, it is implied that the Appearance of the universe has a reality, due to the ignorance of the actual Reality, because if the Absolute were knowable, then alone the universe could be said to be non-existing. But when Mr. Herbert Spencer says in his First Principles, that all the three theories regarding the Universe *viz.* (1) it is a creation by an external agency, or (2) it is self create or (3) it is eternally self existent, are not at all proved, then he apparently thereby implies that the Universe has no existence in the absolute sense, or that it has no existence independently of the Absolute, a belief that entirely coincides with Sankara's views. Any how, that the Absolute exists and that it is unknowable is the verdict of the greatest thinker of the modern age, and it is also the verdict, to an extent, of our sages also, who have said that the *Atman* or the Absolute cannot be reached by both the mind and the speech. It is, therefore, ordinarily Unknowable. Nevertheless, there is a supersensuous state

wherein the mind and the speech are both absent. In this state, the Absolute can be realized, and whoever realizes it, for him only there is no world.

7. *Vedanta* is not *Pantheism* in the sense in which Hegel takes it, according to whom God has changed through evolution into this world, and His perfection is reached in man. *Sufi-ism* is no doubt *Pantheism* wherein like *Vedanta* there is a belief of one existence only. According to this school of philosophy, the universe is actually evolved from God in the same way as a plant sprouts forth from the seed, God being the substratum of the universe and inseparable from it As the plant cannot be conceived as separate from the seed, so there can be no conception of the separateness of the universe from God, and thus the idea of the one existence only is not destroyed. Consequently, all the manifested objects and beings are one with and the same as God. But the *Vedanta* does not say that everything is God, but simply this that there is one Substratum or Noumenon, call it God or Absolute, which appears as many through ignorance about the Absolute being the only one Reality.* There must be a distinction made between "becoming" and "appearing" *Vedanta* says that the Absolute appears as Relative and not that it becomes Relative. To say that the Absolute becomes Relative would mean that contradictions are true. There is apparently a resemblance between the *Vedanta* and the theory advocated by Ernst Hœkel, the famous German Philosopher, who appears to believe in one underlying and eternally existing substance which, in his opinion, may be called as the Divine Essence and which manifests itself both as matter and energy, matter being the *Maya* and energy being the manifested energy of *Brahman* as reflected in *Maya*, and *Brahman* being the sub-

* There is a cult of Sufi-ism also wherein like the *Adwaita Vedanta* there is a belief in one Absolute Existence called Wahdat-i-Wujud, the Phenomena or the Appearances being regarded as manifestations of that Asolute Existence, due to our illusion only. The idea must have been borrowed from the *Vedanta*, as it is entirely foreign to the teachings of Islam.

stratum of both. But there is a material difference between the two theories, inasmuch as the *Vedanta* does not believe in the reality of the manifestations in any absolute sense, which are true in the emperical sense only, while Hœkel being a Materialist, believes in the reality of the manifestations, both matter and mind. According to Hœkel, the seed contains all the potentialities of soul, mind and matter, which constitute the body of a living being, and there is nothing extraneous, while in *Vedanta* the soul is regarded as separate from body (of course in the emperical sense only), being but a reflection of the Absolute, although what is called the *Linga Sharira* or subtle body containing that reflection enters through the seed only.

8. In the strictest metaphysical sense, *Vedanta* is pure Realism, inasmuch as it maintains that there is one Reality only. Empirically, when there is a manifestation of the world and there is the idea of the subject and the object both, it can be said that the *Vedanta* is a combination of Realism and Idealism both Realism is true in so far as there must be some real substratum to the changeful Phenomena. There must be some substance of which these are different manifestations. In *Advaita Vedanta*, there is one substratum and not many. Ideas cannot alone exist by themselves, unless there is some object or objects to produce those ideas. A wall may be the result of thought or a production of mind only, as the Idealists say, having no reality in itself, and a man may be made through hypnotism to perceive it as something else. But this hypnotization must take place in some actually existing object. For instance, an actually existing dry land may be made to be perceived as a lake full of water through hypnotism, and there can be no hypnotization in what is a void.

Idealism is also true in so far as the mind may be made to perceive differently of the same object through hypnotism. Metaphysically, there is one Reality only, and our this emperical state is a sort of hypnotization, and we have to be dehypnotized in order to attain or more correctly speaking, to realize the actual Reality what we are already.

9. As stated above, *Brahman* or the Absolute is pure *Sat-Chit-Ananda, i.e.*, Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute. Professor Huxley has shown that the scientific analysis of the Universe leads us to the postulation of the three ultimate inter-connected principles of matter, energy and consciousness. The *Vedantic* analysis of the Universe however, shows that there is consciousness of the existence of self, and that there are certain experiences by that consciousness, for instance, the experience of the existence of objects external to it, of certain knowledge regarding the self and the said external objects, and of certain feelings produced in the self, of beauty and pleasure, etc., stimulated by the said objects, thus postulating the three ultimate interconnected principles of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. The *Vedanta* says that all the three principles found in this world of relativity have for their ultimate source the Absolute Consciousness, called, consequently, the *Sat-Chit-Ananda* or the Abstract Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, and by the side of which there exists nothing external to be conscious of, by reason of its being the absolute and the only Reality. The Absolute Consciousness, therefore, if conscious of anything at all, is conscious of itself alone and of nothing else. Thus Huxley's three ultimate principles of matter, enegy and consciousness, are included in the above three ultimate principles of the *Vedanta*. Now the *Sat, i.e.*, the essence of all that is existing, has its expression throughout all objects, organic or inorganic, causing their embodiment or *Satta*, and producing activity in them, *i.e.*, *Sphurna* through the vital force called *Prana*. The expression of all the three *i.e. Sat, Chit* and *Ananda* (the essence of all that is existing, the essence of all knowledge and the essence of all feelings) is seen in organic beings only. The various beings are *Chaitanya, i.e.*, sentient and intelligent, because there is the reflection or expression of the Absolute *Chit* or Knowledge in them, acting through the *Antah Karana* or Inner Faculties, and giving them the sense of knowledge. They have the sense of happiness or pleasure, because there is the reflection in them of the absolute *Ananda* or Bliss, also expressing itself

through the *Antah Karana* or mental forces including all the inner faculties.

There is everywhere and at all times the expression of *Sat*, as the *Satta* सत्ता, that is, the fact of the objects having bodies cannot be denied though illusory only. Even in this state of *Ajnana* or ignorance, man has the consciousness of self, *i.e.*, of the I am ness. But there is not everywhere and at all times the expression of *Chit* and *Ananda*, as the sense of knowledge and feelings is not expressed in inanimate objects and in the state of unconsciousness produced, for instance, in deep sleep or brought about by Chloroform or by any deep hurt. Similarly, the sense of pleasure or happiness is not expressed where there is pain. Like the *Brahman* or the Absolute, the *Jiva* too, metaphysically speaking, is pure *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, *i.e.*, Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute ; and so in reality there is no ignorance or pain in him. Emperically, the *Jiva* is however, the reflection of that *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, and the reflection varies with the *Upadhis* or limitations to which he is subject The denser are these *Upadhis*, the greater is the ignorance, and the farther is he from the absolute Bliss. Absolute *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, and not merely a reflection of it, is realized in what is called the supersensuous state by the human beings only, not even by the so-called Devas

Be it noted here that what is called force or energy as a property of matter, has its origin in the Primeval Force called *Prana* which is also expressed through a reflection of the Absolute *Sat* in *Maya*. Similarly, *Antah Karana* or mind, a form of subtle matter according to *Vedanta*, and the result of a certain organisation of matter according to modern science, has its origin in the reflection of the absolute *Chit* only. In fact, all forms of matter, whether subtle or gross, or whether exhibited in the world as a property of it, have their expression through a reflection of the absolute *Sat* or *Chit* only.

10. As the pure *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, *i.e.*, the Absolute expresses itself in the *Jivas* or individuals, it does also express itself as *Iswara* or Universal Being called the Personal God.

Mr. Herbert Spencer believes in the existence of the Absolute, thereby implying a conception of the Abstract Existence or of the *Sat* only, and has no belief in the absolute *Chit* and *Ananda*, *i.e.*, the absolute Knowledge and Bliss. Consequently, he has not reached to the conception of the Personal God, for which conception, a belief in the absolute Knowledge and Bliss is also necessary. When we have the expression of *Chit* and *Ananda* or Knowledge and Bliss in the Universe, we cannot deny them in the Absolute of which the Universe is an expression or which is the Ultimate Source, or more correctly speaking, the substratum of everything in manifestation. Consequently, the manifestation of the Absolute as the Personal God is a conception founded on reason.

स ईश्वरः अनिर्वचनीय प्रेमस्वरूपः

Sa Ishwarah anirvachaniya prema swarupah. This means that the Personal God exists in the state of ignorance respecting the Absolute, and that He does not exist when the Absolute is realized, and therefore, His existence can neither be denied nor affirmed, or in other words, He is neither a Reality nor an unreality, but what is called *anirvachaniya*, *i.e.*, beyond all predication. The Absolute, as stated above, has no attributes, but *avidya* or ignorance imposes on it certain limitations which do not at all belong to it. This ignorance is the root of giving certain attributes to the Absolute to which they can never belong, consisting of the springing up in it of an impulse or desire for creation, preservation and dissolution of the world. These attributes appear to convert the Pure and Perfect *Brahman* into a Personal God with attributes. No doubt it is man who creates a Personal God for himself, or more correctly speaking, to avoid blasphemy, it is his ignorance of his identity with the Absolute that brings a Personal God into existence; and as long as there is this ignorance, the Personal God exists for him apparently in all reality and as surely as he believes in the reality of his own existence separate from the Absolute. When such a God is once acknowledged, He becomes the

ordainer of man's destiny in virtue of his *Karma*, and therefore, His *Bhakti* or devotion is essential for an inner illumination leading to the realization of the Absolute.

11. The Personal God is usually given such attributes as Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Benevolence, etc. John Stuart Mill in one of his three essays on Religion, says that granting God to be Omnipotent, He cannot be said to be Benevolent, considering the amount of misery existing in the world. Apart from individual cases of misery, the distress caused by a widespread famine or epidemic, or calamities resulting from a volcanic eruption or an earthquake, are indescribable. Whole areas are sometimes devastated by such famines or earthquakes, and the living beings who are spoken of as the creatures of a Benevolent God, are subjected to untold horrors resulting from injuries to limbs, starvation and the like. So he says that either God being Omnipotent does not wish the good of His creatures, or being Benevolent, has not the power to do good to them ; *i.e.* if he is Omnipotent, He cannot be Benevolent and *vice versa*. It is to avoid all objections of this kind that Sankara denies all attributes in a Perfect Being. As regards the Personal God who has attributes, Sankara says that it is the devotee who conceives of Him as an ideal of worship, existing in all reality for him, as long as he believes himself to have a real individuality; and it is he who also gives him attributes for the sake of worship and adoration, from which He is perfectly free in the metaphysical sense. The devotee loves and praises his God, and so he gives all the good attributes to Him. In fact, God is Benevolent in the heart of His devotees only, who regard even the calamities befalling them as messages of love from their Beloved, intended for the purification of the dross of sin and impurities of the heart, which is certainly a great help in Realization. To deny the existence of all attributes in the Absolute God, thereby proving the entity of a Pure and Perfect Being free from all imperfections, and also disclaiming all ideas of a personality in Him, and at the same time to hold out to those

who love all that is sublime and beautiful, or have an emotional nature, the ideal of a Personal God with attributes, denoting His unlimited love towards His devotees, is in fact, Sankara's greatest achievement.

12. In short, metaphysically speaking, the Personal God does not exist, there being the existence of the Absolute only. But in the state of ignorance respecting the Absolute being the only existing Reality, there is a Personal God, the same Absolute converted into a Being with all the attributes of creation, preservation and dissolution of the world. He appears as the Ruler of the Universe and is as real as His devotee developing in himself a conception of Him, regards himself to be real. This conception of the Personal God varies with the state of development of the devotee's mind. He is extra-mundane, if the devotee thinks Him so for the purpose of worship and adoration. He is immanent in the universe and every heart, if the devotee raises up for himself such an ideal of Him for His pure love's sake, as it is through His grace only that *Moksha* or freedom is attained Thus the conceptions of the Dualists and the qualified Monists are not entirely wrong, though they are lower truths and not the Ultimate Truth which can be one only

13. It may be said that when the existence of a Personal God is accepted though in a relative sense only, all the objections that have been brought against the God of the Dualists, equally apply to the conception of the *aparama Brahman* or *Iswara* of the *Vedanta*, which to all intents and purposes, is the same as Ramanuja's *Parama Brahman*.

Apart from the objections already touched above against Ramanuja's theory, one great objection is that when God is a Perfect Being as Ramanuja regards Him to be, and is also Omnipotent, how is it that He is the author of a universe full of so many imperfections ? This objection might, however, be met by the contention that God is really perfect and His perfection is not effected by the imperfections of the Universe, because all these imperfections lie

in the material at His disposal, which is eternally existing in Him in a potential state, and which has evolved into this Universe, He only interacting through it. Besides, if there are any imperfections in the Universe, they last only as long as one has not realized the immanence or presence of God in him (not his identity with Him, a belief entirely foreign to this doctrine), which is the result of ignorance, a theory that has been admitted by this school also.

It is true that Sankara's *aparama Brahman or Iswara* is the same as Ramanuja's *Parama Brahman*, and therefore, all the objections that are brought against the latter equally apply to the former. It should however, be understood that it is an illusion only that creates the Personal God of Sankara, and the illusion having no real existence, its product the Lower *Brahman or Iswara* too has also no reality in the metaphysical sense, and it is only the *avidya* or ignorance about the true nature of *Brahman* or the Absolute that is responsible for giving limitations to a Being that is not in reality subject to them. Thus all the imperfections that are seen in the Universe, may be ascribed to *Maya* or Illusion, that indescribable power which converts a Perfect Being into an apparently Imperfect one and which is also the material cause of the Universe. If God is a Pure and Perfect Being as He is considered by all Religions, He cannot be held to be either the efficient or material cause of a world full of imperfections, as otherwise, He too would be an Imperfect Being. Consequently, the Maya theory alone explains the mystery as stated above.

14. Consequently, when a man has realized his identity with the Absolute, there is no longer a need for him to worship or adore the Personal God. He is himself, in that state, the perfect master of the situation, and no dread of sin or sorrow should touch him any longer. Says Swami Vivekananda in one of his American lectures :—

"Know that every thought and word that causes weakness in the world is the only evil that exists. What can

frighten you ? Stand firm as a rock. You are indestructable, you are the Self of all. You are the Pure One and ever blessed. Silly fools tell you you are sinners and so sit down in a corner and weep. You are God of the Universe. Say that and as a lion breaks his cage and comes out, so break this chain of ignorance and delusion and be free for ever."

The above and similar passages occurring in this treatise might produce a wrong impression in the reader's mind as regards the teachings of the *Vedanta* being highly blasphemous, as Divinity is given to man who is only a creature of God. Of course, there exists a class of Vedantists, men of no actual realization, but mere verbal talkers, who regarding everything as God very often ridicule the idea of men going to temples, mosques and churches and prostrating themselves there before, as they say, an imaginary or unseen God, or before images and pictures, and say how great foolishness is it on their part to prostrate themselves before the image of their own making or before an imaginary God, while they themselves are the Lord God of the Universe. In my opinion, such people lack the realization of the true teachings of the *Vedanta*. *Vedanta* never says that every one is the Lord God ; that is of course a sheer blasphemy. There are two Sanskrit words, *viz.*, (1) *Lakshyartha* (लक्ष्यार्थ, and (2) *Vachyartha* (वाच्यार्थ) The former means the inner sense or essence of a thing, the latter being the expression of that essence or what is called the name.

Every word has two significances—one the inner sense or essence for which it stands, and the other the name or expression producing a conception of the outward appearance or form. In the Vedic text Tattvamasi (तत्त्वमसि) or 'That thou art', the word Tat, *i.e.*, "That" essentially stands for *Brahman* or the Absolute, while nominally it stands for *Iswara* or the Personal God. Similarly, Tvam, *i.e.*, "thou" is essentially the *Atman*, but nominally the *Jiva* or the individual soul. Thus the Vedic

Text "That thou art" signifies that both are essentially one and the same, *i.e.*, the *Atman* is *Brahman*, while nominally as the *Jiva* and *Iswara* one is different from the other.

No doubt the *Jiva* or the individual soul and *Iswara* or the Supreme Being are both the expression of the one and the same Essence, *i.e.*, the Absolute; but they are identical in essence only and not in expression. As long as the *Jiva* believes himself to be an individuality separate from all others, or in orther words, as long as he sees multiplicity instead of unity in the Universe, there must remain a difference between the two. Under such a circumstance, the *Jiva* having all the frailties of humanity within him, can never identify himself with *Iswara* or Supreme Being whom he must regard as his Lord and Master. When however, he realizes his oneness with the Absolute in what is called the supersensuous state, then alone he is one with God. Then there exists nothing for him besides his own self which is Divinity itself. In such a state, he realizes the existence of one Reality only, there being none else whom he can regard as his dependents and himself as their master or Lord God. If he then too thinks that he is free and the others are bound, then he must be thought to have the idea of multiplicity which is incompatible with perfect Realization. Besides, in the supersensuous state, there is no possibility of there being a thinking element, the mind being absent entirely. So even in the state of Realization, the *Jiva* can never regard himself as Lord God. In the height of Realization, when a man says "Sivoham" or 'I am God', he means thereby that he is God in essence and not in expression. It is true that he is no longer bound but free. He no longer remains a *Jiva*. What is he then ? He is the Absolute *i.e.* the Whole what he has always been, though through ignorance, he has all the while been supposing himself as a part only. The Sruti also says : जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः *Jivo Brahmaiva naparah, i.e.*, the *Jiva* is essentially the *Brahman* and not separate from it. It does not say जीवो ईश्वरः *Jivo Iswara, i.e.*, the Jiva

is *Iswara* or Lord God. After becoming one with the Absolute, it is as a whole only and not as a part that he is reflected as *Iswara* through the ignorance of others.

15. So until there is no realization of the actual Reality, let all men go to temples, mosques and churches for prayers or worship, as no doubt these temples, etc. and other forms prescribed by Religion, such as images, rosary, etc., are great helps to beginners still unaware of the highest truth. But it would be better, if when going there, they too try to realize God or the image of God they see as the Divinity present within the temple of their own hearts.

It is observed that there are gradations of intellectual and spiritual developments in men. The majority of them are so little gifted with any real intellectuality or spirituality that they may very well be classed with brutes. In others if there is any intellectual or spiritual growth, it is hardly worth the name. Very few persons only are highly developed intellectually as well as spiritually. When such is the case, we cannot expect men of a lesser development to grasp high intellectual or spiritual thought all at once. They can not be at once made to grasp the idea of an abstract God. As in the case of babies that are at first taught letters on the Kindergarten system, the instruction in spiritual knowledge should also commence on somewhat similar lines in case of persons still beginners in religion. Where there is hardly any idea of spirituality as yet, as in the case of some of the savage tribes of Africa and the Polynesian Islands, the best way of elevating them spiritually, would be first to draw their attention to their own crude notions about religion. If they have not as yet reached to the idea of a spirit and are sticking to concrete objects only, such as a fetish which they worship as their protector, they must be told that they are quite welcome to their mode of worship, but that they should try to have a conception of a spirit behind that object, or of a spirit of which the object worshipped by them is a mere representative. They should know that the fetish itself is not their protec-

tor, but that it represents their protector who is actually a spirit or a superior being. Where there is an idea of a spirit which is worshipped in an idol or an image representing the spirit, the people worshipping the idol, should be told to stick to it only till then when they have fully controlled their minds. After imparting this knowledge, let them go on with their modes of worship, until they are awakened to the thought that the spirit and not the fetish is the object of their worship, or that the being whom they had hitherto been propitiating through an idol, is free from all desires for propitiation and has no form; and thus gradually only, they must be brought to the conception of the abstract Divinity. But it is quite ridiculous that men with a high spiritual development and having no longer any need of such helps in the shape of idols, etc., should cling to the worship of idols or images, instead of realizing the Divinity within their own hearts where it is ever present.

The *Vedanta* does not in the real sense hold out before man any ideal of an imaginary or unseen God. It says that God alone really exists and can be realized by everybody within himself, if he takes the trouble to do so. He is ever present within everybody, and it is but to lift up the veil of ignorance to obtain His vision, there being effaced all idea of separateness between the seer and the Seen, both being realized as one and the same Being.

16. The Personal God is one and not many. The Christian Missionaries are often heard to remark :—" Beware of the gods of the heathens", as if there are many Gods. If from the multiplicity of the names and forms of God, a belief in the plurality of Gods is inferred, then certainly there are innumerable Gods, or at least as many as there are languages in the world. Everything existing has a form and a name given to it Men having as yet no idea of an Abstract God, necessarily, conceive of Him through some forms most dear to them, varying with their peculiar conceptions about Him, and give Him appropriate names expressive of those forms that are based mostly on

the various attributes of God. A variety of forms and names, therefore, does not indicate that there are many Gods, as God can be one and one only. Consequently, men who fight merely on names and forms of God are bigots and fanatics of the worst type. A thing can have any number of forms with a differentiating name for each, but the thing will remain one and the same in essence. For instance, gold may be converted into any number of ornaments having different names, but gold will remain gold and will not become iron or any other thing. Again a heathen's God is generally written with a small initial letter, while the God of the Christians is invariably writtten with a capital G, as if He is more powerful than the other. A God under whatsoever form or name He is worshipped, can never be powerless, as otherwise He would no longer be a God.

The Hindus are Monotheists from the very beginning, as is testified from their oldest record, *viz.*, the *Rig Veda* of which the following mantra is very significant :—

Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti.

" He who exists is One, sages call Him by various names, such as *Agni*, *Varuna*, *Mitra*, etc."

Later on in the Upanishads, this mantra is interpreted in a still wider sense signifying the Unity of all existences, in which sense, Hindus may be called strict Unitarians or Monists.

17. There are several stages of the Personal God, though He is, as stated above, one only in essence and reality. As *Mayadhis*, He is simply *Iswara* or *Antar yamin*, the inter Ruler within every being. Then He develops as *Trimurti* or the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva according to His various functions of creation, preservation and dissolution of the Universe, and finally as Incarnations of God, appearing for the purpose of imparting spiritual knowledge to men or for the protection of His saints and devotees.

The *Trimurti* can be best explained in a right sense in the light of the *Vedanta* only, which is as follows :—

18. As stated above, the one Reality that is manifested as *Jivas* or individual souls is also manifested, through the ignorance of the *Jivas*, as *Iswara* or as a Cosmic Being, the Ruler of the Universe. It must be stated here that neither the Jiva nor the Iswara is any part of or an emanation from the *Brahman* or the Absolute, because there can be no parts or divisions of an Infinity. *Iswara* is, of course, essentially the Absolute reflected in *Maya*; and the *Jiva* also is metaphysically the same reflected in *Ajnana*, or individual ignorance, thus appearing as an individual only. Now from our daily experience, we find that the individual consciousness has three states into which it daily passes, *viz.* (1) The waking state, (2) the dreaming state and (3) the deep sleep state. Beyond these three states, there is a fourth state of the Unconditioned or as it is called *Suddha Chetan* whereby the *Atman* is meant. The consciousness of the waking state is called *Visva*, that of the dreaming state *Tejas* and that of the deep sleep state *Prajna*, the Absolute or the *Atman* in the fourth state being called *Jiva Sakshi* * or the Witness within every being. In *Lakhsyartha* (*i.e.*) in essence, the consciousness in all the three states is identified with the *Jiva Sakshi* or the *Atman*, and it is in *Vachyartha* or expression only that it is named differently as above, in accordance with the different *upadhis* or limitations to which it is subject in the various states. The *upadhis* are as follows :—The *upadhi* of *Prajna* where there is *Ajnana* or ingorance only, is called *Karana Sharira*, or causal body, owing to the ignorance being the cause of individuality The *upadhi* of the *Tejas* is called the *Sukshma* or *Linga Sharira*, *i.e.*, the subtle body which is a compound of the mental and other inner faculties consisting of *Manas* (mind) *Chit* (centre of knowledge and feelings), *Buddhi* (intellect) and *Ahankara* or Egotism, of the five organs of sense, of the five organs of action and of five *Pranas* as they are called. Lastly the *upadhi* of the *Visva* is called the *Sthula Sharira* or gross body

* *Note.*—The word *Sakshin* is explained further on.

through which it is acting and enjoying or suffering while it is awake.

Like the individual consciousness or *jiva*, the Universal or Supreme Consciousness, *i.e.*, the *Iswara* has three states and three bodies as follows :—

Samashti or Universal Consciousness	*Vyashti* or individual consciousness	*Upadhi* or Limitation.
1 Iswara	Corresponding to *Prajna* with which it is identified metaphysically	Inter Ruler of the causal body of Iswara
2 Hiranvagarbha...	Corresponding to Tejas with which it is identified metaphysically	Inter Ruler of the subtle body.
3 Virata	Corresponding to Visva with which it is identified metaphysically	Inter Ruler of the gross body

All these three states of the Universal Consciousness are identified metaphysically with the fourth state of the *Iswara Sakshi* by which the Absolute as the Witness of the Universal Consciousness in all its three states is meant.

It should be remembered that the different bodies of the individual consciousness *ie.* of the *Jivas* make up the bodies of the Universal Consciousness or *Iswara* as stated above.

When the individuality of a *Jiva* disappears through the realization of his identity with the Absolute, there being no more a *Jiva Sakshi* * or the *Atman* in the capacity of a witness in connection with him,or in other words, the witness disappearing on the disappearance of the scene before him of which he had hitherto been the spectator, and also there being no longer any idea of an *Iswara* in regard to him, or in other words, there being no more any Master when there is no servant, both the *Jiva Sakshi* or the Absolute *Atman* as witness to the individual consciousness and the *Iswara Sakshi* or the Absolute *Brahman* as Witness to the Universal Consciousness, disappear into

* *Note.*—The word *Sakshin* is explained further on.

one Absolute Whole of which they had hitherto been but two states only, neither differing in essence, nor forming any part.

Thus the *Atman*, *i e.*, the *Sakshin* or the witness to the individual consciousness, is the same as the *Paramatman* or the Witness to the Universal Consciousness, and therefore, there is the Absolute existence of one Being only.

The word *Paramatman* is often very wrongly used as an equivalent for *Iswara*. The two words are not, however, exact equivalents. The one, *i e.*, the *Paramatman* being the *Sakshin* or Witness to the Supreme Consciousness or *Iswara*, is a state only of the Absolute *Brahman* which is actionless and desireless, and therefore, nothing can proceed from it in the shape of granting prayers, etc *Iswara* being the Cosmic Reflection of the Absolute in *Maya*, is on the contrary, the active Lord and Ruler of the Universe. Essentially *Iswara* is one with *Paramatman* but not emperically.

19. In Puranas, *Iswara* is named Siva, *Hiranyagarbha*, Brahma and *Virata* Vishnu. Siva from whom the Universe evolves at the time of creation, and becomes involved at the time of dissolution, is the Inter-Ruler of the causal body or *Karana Sharira* of *Iswara* Correctly speaking, the Universe proceeds from Siva only to whom it had returned or in whom it had become involved at the end of the last *Kalpa*, as naturally a thing must be evolved from that Being or substance only wherein it had become involved last. So Siva is the *Karana Brahma* or the Efficient Cause of the world in the real sense of the word, and scientifically too, dissolution means returning to the causes, which is also the first axiom of Kapila's philosophy. But Siva is designated as the Third Person of the Trinity, in virtue of His function as Destroyer, which is of course the last function of the Deity, in regard to the world. Vishnu, therefore, becomes the Second and Brahma the First Person of the Trinity respectively. Brahma from whom the manifestation of all subtle creation, *i e.*, the mind, etc.,

takes place, is the Inter-Ruler of the subtle body or *Sukshma Sharira*. In fact, it is He who thinks of all the prototypes of the different beings, whether plants, animals or human beings in His Cosmic Mind before they assume gross forms. Vishnu from whom the whole gross manifestation proceeds, is the Inter-Ruler of the whole gross Universe (*Sthula Brahmanda*). It should be pointed out here that the causal body interlies within the subtle body like one coat of an onion within the other, and the causal and subtle bodies interlie within the gross body. Vishnu as the Inter-Ruler of the gross Universe, is also named *Sthiti* showing thereby that He is the Sustainer of the Universe. Vishnu is, therefore, the Deity who is worshipped in the exercise of His function as Sustainer of the World, with due regard to the needs of every individual consciousness of the waking state, wherein the maintenance or preservation of the gross form or body is the prevailing instinct. But where the goal is Realization, which means destruction of all gross and subtle forms, Siva is the Deity sought for the destruction of the *Ajnana* or ignorance which alone is the obstacle in its way. Thus, there is One Being only inter-ruling within all the three bodies, and that Being is identified, metaphysically, as shown above, with the Absolute *Brahman*; and therefore, it is the one and the same Reality that appears as Siva, Brahma and Vishnu, having different names and forms in accordance with the different *upadhis* or limitations imposed on that Being by *avidya*.

20. This Absolute Divinity of which a reflection only is, as stated above, active within every body, is present by itself also in every being as *Sakshin* or witness. This must not be confounded with the *Chidabhas* or the reflection of the Absolute, which is the Ego in every individual *Jiva*. What is this *Sakshin* must be explained here. In the state of non-manifestation of either the *Jiva* or *Iswara*, there would be the Absolute *Brahman* only, but when there is the manifestation of both the *Jivas* and

the *Iswara*, the very same Absolute appears as *Sakshin* or the witness in relation to both the manifestations. He is as if the spectator of the scene before Him. When there is the seen or the scene, there must also be a Seer or Spectator of it. Of course He is the Seer relative to the scene before Him, and therefore, it will perhaps be said that in any such belief, the idea of relativity springs up in the Absolute where it is not Our answer to this is that though apparently there springs up an idea of relativity in the Absolute, there is however, no conception of a cause and effect produced therein thereby, the Seer being quite unmingled with the scene, far less being a cause of it, in the same way as a spectator of an ordinary scene in the world, is not the cause of it, nor is concerned with it in any way.

21. The *Advaita Vedanta* alone affords a reasonable explanation of the *Trimurti*. The Dualists believe in One Supreme Being called Vishnu or Siva, the other two being regarded as inferior Gods, exercising their functions of the creation, etc., of the world by virtue of powers delegated to them by the Supreme Being. In fact, in some sects, the remaining two Deities are styled as *Jivas* having attained their present status through asceticism or *tapas*, or through their devotion to the Almighty. It is true there are related in the Puranas, stories extolling one Form of the Deity over the other These stories, however, are meant to intensify the faith of the devotees in the particular Ideals of worship adopted by them. It is the question of *Ishta* as it is called. An *Ishta* is simply an ideal of worship adopted by a devotee to which he sticks, excluding others. For instance, the ideal of a person is to see intense love in the Supreme Being. This may not be the ideal of another who by his own nature as well as the evil tendencies of his mind, looks upon the Deity as a Personification of all that is dreadful, ready to deal chastisement for the transgression of His laws.

Vedanta also provides an ideal of worship for thos

who are believers in nature. Nature is but *Maya* which when acted upon by a reflection of the *Brahman* or the Absolute, is converted into this material world, and then there is a manifestation of *Iswara* and *Jiwas*. *Iswara* is regarded as a Male Being. Is God really a Male Being ? Swami Rama Tirtha, on being questioned by some body in America as to whether God is a Male or Female Being, replied that He is neither Master, nor Mrs, nor Miss, but Mystery. What is He then? *Brahman* the Absolute God is, in Sanskrit, neuter, that is, belonging to neither gender. But when we conceive of the Divinity as a Male Being, we can equally have a conception of it as a Female Being The Personal God is the expression of the Absolute in *Maya*. Those who give preference to the *Maya* aspect of the Personal God, ascribe female attributes to the God-head, *Maya* or *Sakti* being feminine in Sanskrit. They call the Deity as Mahamaya which conception is further developed into Personal Goddesses, such as *Kali*, *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati*, etc. As those who believe in the Male Deity, call Him Father, similarly, those who are the adorers of the Female Aspect of the Divinity, give it the name of Mother. Those who combine both the conceptions, call Siva as Father and *Kali* as Mother.

That the Hindus when realizing the Absolute Unity in *samadhi* or supersensuous state, are strict Unitarians, or Monists, and when holding a belief in the existence of an external God for the sake of worship and adoration, are strict Monotheists, is illustrated by the following quotations from the Puranas and Stotras :—*

Om salutations to Vasudeva who is ever Holy Nothing exists beside Him who transcends all.

In me as well as in other beings and in the world, there is Thy Presence only indicative of Thy Power and Attributes O Lord !

Salutations to Him, salutations to Him, salutations to Him, the High Souled One, of whom there is not a single

* *Note.*—The original Sanskrit Slokas are given in appendix.

name or form, and who is known as Existence alone, or who is known as a Being only.

Om, salutations to Thee, O Vishnu ! over and over again in whom is everything, from whom is everything, or who is everything, the Refuge of all.

Who is the Supreme Soul, who is One, who is the Source of the world, who is beginningless and desireless, who is formless and who is known through the syllable Om, from whom the universe proceeds, by whom it is sustained, and in whom it gets absorbed, Him I offer my salutations.

Thou art Brahma the Creator, Thou art Vishnu the Preserver and Thou art Siva the Dispenser of endless blessings, involving or dissolving everything in Thyself.

Thou assumest various Forms to enable Thy devotees to meditate upon Thee, and whichever of Thy Forms is liked by a particular devotee, in that very Form Thou dost manifest Thyself to him.

22 Incarnations are but objectifications of God, or more correctly speaking, the expressions of the Divine Attributes and Powers in man, the outcome of the intense longing and desire of devotees for a visual sight of Him. It is not that the Divinity enters any human body thereby confining itself within it, but that it expresses itself in that body, either as a partial or a perfect Manifestation, as the case may be. The *Jiva* is also Divinity in the metaphysical sense, but his Divinity is covered up by *upadhis* or limitations and has to be unfolded. There is no such unfoldment in the case of Incarnations in whom the pure Divinity shines in all its Glory, the *upadhis* being merely *Satvic*, without any admixture of the *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* qualities ; and though appearing as confined within bodies, they are not actually so, but are, on the contrary, ever realizing their oneness with the Absolute *Brahman*. A *Jiva*, though he is potentially Divinity itself, is a being whose knowledge is limited, being covered up

by a thick veil of ignorance that has to be lifted up through *tapas* and *yoga* (austerities) before he can aspire to omniscience. An Incarnation, on the contrary, is a Being who is actually born with full powers of omniscience, etc. Sri Krishna was the highest expression of the Divinity in this sense, or in other words, He was the most complete Avatara in the true significance of the word, while others were what is called an *Ansa Avatara* or a partial Incarnation expressing their Divinity at a particular age and for a particular purpose only *Jivas* being potentially Divinity itself, there have been occasionally manifestations of the Divine power through them also, the result of *Yoga* or *Tapas*. It may be stated here that Incarnations can be rightly proved from the *Adwaita* standpoint only, of which the belief is that nothing exists wherein Divinity is not present.

23. Of All the Incarnations of God, Krishna alone asserted His Divinity from His very birth. Here there was not the least idea of any conformity to the *Vedic* and *Sastric* commandments. What were the Vedas and Sastras to Him who was Himself their Inspirer? Can an Almighty Power be bound down by its own laws and rules? The *Srutis* containing the spiritual truths of the Vedas being, however, immutable, were of course more fully illustrated and explained in the *Bhagawad Gita*. In regard to Sri Krishna, Swami Vivekananda says: "The Infinite and the Impersonal can be grasped only through a Finite and Concrete Manifestation of it. Of all the Ideals of a Concrete Manifestation of God, none is higher or loftier than that presented before us in the Divine Person of Sri Krishna, which is far more impressive than any imaginary conception of the Personal God." Says Swami Abhedananda, spiritual brother of Swami Vivekananda, in one of his lectures before an American audience:—

"Krishna possessed all the Divine powers and showed by His actions that all noble human qualities reached perfection in Him. Nowhere do we find another exam-

ple of perfect embodiment of all the moral, spiritual and godly attributes which were manifested in the character of Krishna. All the religious leaders of India down to the present day, have regarded Him as the Ideal Master, the Ideal Hero, the perfect Incarnation of God, and the greatest of all the Spiritual Manifestations of the world. No other Incarnation, neither Buddha, nor Christ, can take the place of Krishna, because neither of them could harmonize God and the world so well as was done by this world Redeemer. . . . . Every word of the Bhagawad Gita bears testimony to the fact that Krishna was Divinity in human form." And then again he says:— "For the first time in the religious history of the world was preached by Krishna universal toleration for all sects and creeds, and it was He who declared :—

"Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever religion, I reach him. All men are struggling in the paths which ultimately lead to Me."

Thus He sounded the death-knell of religious bigotry and persecution among various sects. * * * Shall we wonder why the Hindus of to-day worship and honor the name of Krishna and why he has been upheld as the highest Ideal of the nation? No other Incarnation of the Divinity appeals to the mind of the Hindus so strongly as this sin atoning Saviour of mankind. As He has been the national Ideal in the past, so will He remain in time to come. Every Hindu realizes that whosoever worships Him attains to Salvation and eternal happiness. Krishna Himself promised thus in the Bhagawad Gita :—

"Giving up all the formalities of religion come unto Me, follow Me, take refuge in Me, I shall make thee free from sins and shall give thee eternal life, grieve not."

Of the various aspects of Sri Krishna, one is the grand ideal of His Divine Love, so well illustrated in the Bhagawata Purana, wherein the sole ideal is Love for Love's sake, and for nothing else, not for any return in the

shape of the fulfilment of desires. It was through Sri Krishna only that such an ideal was for the first time proclaimed to the world.

The aspects of Sri Krishna's character, as revealed to the world, were as varied as were the inclinations of the people of His age towards Him. Being the Personification of the Divine Beauty, He was the most Beautiful Person of His time, and in fact of all times. His Beauty, therefore, served and still serves as a fascination for the attraction towards Him of all loving souls. Such an attraction by the Divine Enchantment is necessary, as a first step, in the *Prema marga* or the path of love, for producing an inner illumination in the individual soul, the intensity of its love for a Concrete Manifestation of the Divine Beauty picturing in the heart an image of the Divine Beloved The ecstacy of love, as it increases, produces an incessant concentration of mind on that Image in which the soul ultimately loses itself, forgetting all idea of separateness from it. The consequence is that the soul in the end, realizes the grand truth of its identity with the Image of its Beloved, the Concrete Manifestation of the Divine Beauty, or more correctly speaking, with the Ultimate Reality as it is called, of which that Divine Concrete Form is but a Reflection In truth, there can be no real love of God produced in the heart of an individual, unless either he actually beholds the Divine Beauty manifested through a Concrete Form of it, or pictures that Beauty in his heart through an image of that Beautiful Form The idea of a love for an Abstract God, or even for a Personal God, without a conception of a beautiful concrete form of His, is quite absurd and impracticable. In his early age, Sri Krishna earned for himself the loveliest of all His names, the name of *Mohana* or the Divine Enchanter. His flute sounded a note, that mysterious note, full of deep significance, a significance that has been wrongly understood by many people, but which has been correctly understood by those people to whom the mystery of

His Divine love has been revealed. The stirring notes of His flute conveyed the message of love, of His Divine Love, to all souls which were eager for a spiritual union with His Divine Self through His love only. The Gopis' love is, indeed, a mystery, known only to the true lovers of God, who have dived deep in the ocean of love. There have been, no doubt, such filthy souls as have given a sensual touch to the love between the Gopis and Sri Krishna, and have indulged in all sorts of sensual songs, thereby revealing their own sensual nature-songs that were intended more for the gratification of their own sensual inclinations than for any true love for Him. Nothing written or sung by such persons, can ever tarnish a character that is so grand and sublime, and that must ever remain spotless, as long as there is the ideal of the Divine Love in the world Love in Sanskrit Poetry, is depicted as proceeding from a female towards a male, evidently based on the philosophical conception that the *Prakriti* or nature which is feminine, is constantly dancing before the *Purusha* or the Male Being. Herein Sri Krishna is that Male Being, or the only One Male Being, regarded as the Ideal Beloved, or in other words, the Divine Centre of Love, round which all individual souls that are still in *Prakriti* or nature, are dancing for their emancipation from the thraldom of *Prakriti* or *Maya*. He appears in the love scenes as a *Prema Murti* or as Love Personified, a Divine Magnet of Love, attracting all loving souls towards Him and equally responding to their love, He Himself, however, remaining perfectly unattached, in the same way as the *Purusha* is unconcerned with the doings of *Prakriti*, no matter, let it dance before Him for ever and ever.

To Arjuna and Uddhava who sought Him for an instruction in the knowledge of the *Atman*, He appeared in the capacity of a Grand Spiritual Teacher, as the Divine Manifestation of the Absolute *Brahman*, while to those who were oppressors of His devotees, and who, conse-

quently, looked upon Him as their enemy, He appeared as their Destroyer, wielding His power for their destruction. Herein, His aspect was that of an Incarnation of Vishnu who as Sustainer of the Equilibrium of the world, incarnates Himself from time to time for the restoration of that Equilibrium which may be disturbed at any time by the preponderance of the evil element over the good. Consequently, the Lord Sri Krishna combined in Himself all the various Ideals, viz., of love (*Bhakti*), knowledge (*Gnana*) and worship necessary for the propitiation of the Deity, in order to obtain His favours that are requisite for the preservation of life, and He was therefore, the most perfect Incarnation of the Divinity. In fact, Krishna was a living Example of His own teachings as preached by Him in the *Gita*, and well it has been said by Manmathnath Datta, the author of the Prophets of India, that had Sri Krishna removed His Personality from the world without preaching His *Gita*, His acts would ever have remained mysterious and He Himself a perfect mystery. People object to the ways and means adopted by Sri Krishna for the salvation of souls, and there can be no question that His character is certainly inexplicable to those who do not believe in His Divinity. But the mystery becomes quite clear when His Divinity is once admitted, which can never be bound down by any such laws as are meant for the guidance of human beings For instance, who can blame the All Powerful God for His permitting such terrible sufferings as are caused by a widespread famine or by an earthquake, though it is laid down by Him only that no one should cause an injury to another. We ought to look to the words or commandments of God and of God Incarnates and not to His or Their acts. Even in this mundane world, a king is considered as above the laws enacted by him for the guidance of his subjects, and when it is so, why should not the Almighty God be above His laws, and there is certainly no body superior to Him to question Him.

According to the *Vedanta* all this is in *Maya*, or is an illusion only, and nothing in *Maya* is perfect. Outside Maya there is One existence only of the Absolute, free from all qualities and imperfections. The ideal of love, mentioned above, however, is not incompatible with a belief in *Adwaitism*, but is perfectly in consonance with it, love being inherent in human nature, ever prompting it to realize its oneness with the nature of God with which it is essentially identical.

The most prominent feature of Sri Krishna's character is, however, that of a World Teacher and Saviour, so well illustrated through the grand teachings of the Bhagawad Gita, wherein the ideal of work for work's sake and not for any return, was preached so grandly and for the first time to the world.

Verily ! India is the land of spirituality and metaphysical science. It is the birth place of the great Saviours of the world like Krishna and Buddha who have revolutionized the world of religion and thought. It has also produced a galaxy of spiritual and intellectual geniuses, among whom may be mentioned the name of Sri Shankaracharya who has won the highest laurels in the domain of philosophy and metaphysics, the greatest commentator of the *Vedanta*, and at the same time, one of the greatest philosophers of all ages and of all the world.

24. It must also be stated here that God in all His apparent manifestations as *Iswara* or *Trimurti* or Incarnations, does never actually get confined within any area or body, say within the Universe as the Immanent God, or within the bodies of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the world, or within the bodies of Rama and Krishna as His Incarnations. In all these conditions, He is eternally free and unbound, always realizing His oneness with the Impersonal God who has no limitations, and if He at all appears as limited or bound, it is due to the desires of the individual souls that give Him various attributes for the sake of worship and the

consequent fulfilment of their desires. Now take the instance of an absolute king who is perfect master of himself and is free to act, but who appears as bound when attending to the wants and solicitations of his subjects, undergoing all sorts of pains and trouble for their sake and even sacrificing his pleasures and ease, but is at the same time always realizing his perfect freedom of action which is as if his real nature. On the contrary, the *Jiva* or the individual soul who is also free and unbound metaphysically, does not realize his actual freedom through ignorance or *Upadhis* which he has imposed upon himself, and is therefore, completely bound like a slave and is at the mercy of his Lord the Personal God whom he has himself through ignorance brought into existence as an external Master for himself.

25. It will be seen that the mode of reasoning adopted in this treatise, is different from what is usually followed in the discussion of such subjects. For instance, it is usually said that we get the idea of beauty from certain concrete objects which we consider as beautiful, such as a beautiful flower, a beautiful person, a beautiful landscape, etc., and that apart from the beautiful concrete objects, there is no beauty existing in the absolute sense. According to our theory, however, there is the existence of the absolute or abstract Beauty only, and the beauty manifested in the concrete objects, is but a reflection or expression of that absolute Beauty in the perceiver, and not in the object itself, the object only serving as a stimulus to the perception of beauty in it. There is in the perceiver, an ocean of the absolute Bliss or Beauty, hidden or covered by thick layers of a number of *Upadhis* or limitations, due to the incessant disturbing influences of mind which is ever active When the mental activity is stopped, even for a while, or say the mind is concentrated on an object, the layer of the *Upadhis* is lifted up for the time being, and a reflection of the absolute Bliss or Beauty produces the sensation of beauty or pleasure, the object serving only as

a stimulus. This reflection of the absolute Bliss or Beauty can take place only when there is a concentration of mind, and varies with the degree of concentration. There is no pleasure or beauty actually in the objects, but the perceiver of it, under a delusion, ascribes it to them. An object that is beautiful in the eye of one person, may not be so in the eye of another. For instance, Leila was immensely beautiful in the eyes of Majnoon, while she was quite an ugly looking girl in the eyes of others. When Majnoon was told of her ugliness, he only said that every body should see Leila through Majnoon's eyes in order to realize her beauty. Majnoon's mind was completely concentrated on the person of Leila on account of his passionate love for her, and so the more the intensity of his passion for her increased, the more his mind was concentrated on her, and the more did she appear beautiful to him. In this case, the absolute Beauty shone in Leila through concentration of Majnoon's mind.

Now to return to our flower. On the first perception, perhaps, a trace only of beauty is visible in the flower, due to but a momentary concentration of mind, but it is enough to increase the concentration on account of the pleasing sight before the eye. The increased concentration, in its turn, stimulates an intenser reflection of the absolute Beauty, thus gradually increasing the sense of beauty in the flower. Thus it is why that we do not at once realize beauty in any object; it is after we have looked upon it for sometime that we sense the beauty in it, and this is due to the concentration of mind only.

Consequently, whether an object is more or less beautiful, depends on the degree of concentration of the mind. If beauty is not the result of concentration of the mind, then how is it that the same object that appeared at one time full of beauty loses all its charms after having been seen constantly by the same man ? The reason is that after some time, there is no longer the same concentration of mind directed to it, as was the case before. What you

once regard as an ugly object on account of your bestowing a cursory glance only on it, will never concentrate your mind upon it, and therefore, you will never perceive any beauty in it. But in the eye of a man whose mind is ever concentrated, and who perceives the absolute Divine Beauty in every object, through a reflection of it in his own mind, there is no such thing as ugliness in the world. Similar is the case with the pleasure derived from taste. A certain dish of food is very tasteful and delicious to a man who partakes of it when he is healthy and hungry, but the same dish does not give him any pleasure at all, or perhaps he is not inclined to partake of it even, if he is in any way sick at stomach and does not feel any hunger. Again the same dish which is so delicious to one man fails to give any relish to another. The pleasure of taste, therefore, does not really lie in the food but in the concentration of mind which is produced in that man only who eats it greedily or who is hungry.

26. The height of pleasure reached in acts of sexual intercourse, is due to there being, in such acts, the greatest concentration of mind, increasing with the increase of pleasure derived, though producing an equal amount of reaction afterwards, which is called pain. Where pleasure is but a reflection of the absolute Bliss, in which case it always has an end, lasting for a time only, it is always followed by a reaction, as every action has a re-action equal and opposite. The re-action is called pain. Pain is but the want or cessation of pleasure, and has no existence whatsoever in the absolute sense, being experienced in the absence of pleasure, the reflection of the absolute Bliss. So it is proved according to our theory, that where there is concentration of mind, there is pleasure ; and where the mind is not concentrated, but is distracted on the contrary, there is a sense of pain, the intensity of pleasure and pain depending on the degree of the concentration or distraction of the mind. In the state of deep sleep, when all activity of mind ceases for some time, there is the greatest amount of

bliss on account of the perfect and uninterrupted reflection of the absolute Bliss, the pleasure being experienced after a return of consciousness, *i.e.*, after waking.

But when the mind is concentrated on the Personal God or when concentration is produced by asceticism, in which state all objects are, one after the other, excluded from concentration, the layer of *Upadhis* is lifted once for all, and then there is the realization of the absolute Bliss itself and not of any reflection of it. This is the state of what is called *Paramananda* or Eternal Bliss, the state of the *Jivan Muktas*. After that realization, there is no possibility of any reaction, as the absolute Bliss once realized has no end Like gravitation a manifestation of which takes place only when a concrete thing is being attracted, say by the Earth, and the absolute existence of which cannot be denied by reason of a concrete expression of it, we cannot deny the existence of the abstract Beauty or Bliss of which a manifestation takes place, of course, through concrete objects only, but which unlike gravitation is realizable as abstract also in transcendental states.

27. In conclusion, the solution of the Mystery of God and the Universe is that there is the existence of the Absolute alone, which is the only Reality, and what is perceived by the senses, is a mere illusion, existing during our ignorance of that Reality but destroyable by the knowledge of the Absolute Existence.

28. This Absolute is the source of all manifestations, not directly in any sense, but indirectly through a reflection of it in *Maya*, which is but an illusion only, due to our ignorance about the reality of the Absolute. Herein *Vedanta* differs from *Sankhya* in which *Prakriti* or matter is not only a reality but also the sole actor, *i.e.*, self-evolving and self-involving, uninfluenced by spirit. In the *Vedanta*, matter is said to be acted upon by spirit, though not directly but indirectly through a reflection of it in matter, for it is an established fact in *Vedanta* that matter cannot act unless it is associated with spirit, and spirit too cannot

act unless associated with matter, for *Brahman* the Absolute appears as active only when it is associated with *Maya* through a reflection of it in the latter, thus appearing as *Iswara* and individual souls that are perceived as active. This activity in *Jiva* or *Iswara* is due neither to the spirit which is essentially actionless, nor to *Maya* which is also said to be inert, but to the association of the one with the other in the manner stated above. This is well illustrated by the oft quoted simile of the snake in the rope. There the illusion produces all the appearance of an active snake in the essentially inactive rope. Neither the rope nor the illusion has any activity, but both together produce the illusion of the active snake, the reflection of the rope in the illusion being at the same time the cause of the perception of the snake and also of the activity in it. In the *Nyaya* system, the spirit is the actor; in *Sankhya*, activity lies in matter only, whether potential or kinetic. In *Vedanta*, essentially neither the spirit is active nor is there any activity in matter, but the spirit appears as active through its association with matter, which is but an illusion only. As already stated, *Brahman* is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, *i.e.*, Existence, Knowledge and Bliss absolute, of which *Sat* is the source of all relative existences, *Chit* the source of all relative knowledge, while *Ananda* is the source of all relative feelings, such as pleasure, beauty and of everything that is good, of course, not directly but indirectly through a reflection of each in *Maya* as mentioned above.

29. There is no idea of good or evil in the Absolute, but all the good or evil that is perceived in the world must be considered as having the Absolute only for its source, otherwise how could it have its existence in the world which is but a reflection of it, *Maya* or our illusion only being the real cause of its apparent manifestation from a Being where it is not. Good or evil both have no absolute existence whatsoever, for what is regarded as good by some persons is considered as evil by others. Besides, good and evil are not two different things, there being no

essential difference between them, and whatever difference there is, it is not in kind but in the degree of manifestation only. For instance, where there is less heat, there is cold, and lesser the heat, the greater the cold, but the heat is all the while there You cannot reach to an absolute cold, as the thermometer will continue measuring heat and will indicate heat only to the lowest point, it being impossible to fix a minimum. Likewise you cannot reach to an absolute heat for the same reason, as no maximum limit of it can be fixed. Similarly, there is no absolute darkness or light in this world of relativity. There are gradations of light and darkness, the lesser the light, the greater the darkness. But as heat and light are both considered as very conducive to our existence, without which there would be no life, no action and no pleasure, they are considered as good, and their opposites, cold and darkness as evil. Similar is the case with the other pairs of opposites as they are called, *viz.*, pleasure and pain, virtue and sin, truth and falsehood. You cannot make any difference between truth and untruth, unless you reach to the highest conception of the ultimate truth, which is another name for the absolute Truth. Whatever conduces to our well-being, is regarded as good, and its opposite as evil. So it would be quite right for us to say that what conduces to our well-being and to our very preservation, is good and has its source in the Absolute *Chit* and *Ananda*, the opposites being only lesser manifestations of the same thing, fail to serve the said purpose and are, for this reason only, regarded as evils.

In the Absolute there is no idea of good or evil as stated already, but in this world of relativity also, there is nothing purely good or evil. A thing that is good at one time turns out an evil at another. No doubt truth is a good quality in itself, and its opposite untruth a bad one ; but is it really so when the time for a real test comes ? There are occasions when a truth may prove a curse and an untruth a blessing. A story is related in the *Puranas* about a certain man who was being pursued by bandits for the sake of his wealth,

and who was killed downright by them on a Rishi, who had taken a vow of speaking the truth and nothing but truth, informing them of the place of his concealment. Herein an untruth would have certainly been a blessing and a good quality, had the Rishi expressed his ignorance to those bandits about the whereabouts of their victim. Similarly, the betrayal of a person by another who is his accomplice in a certain act, is no doubt vicious in itself and is certainly an act of treachery towards the betrayed person, but the same is looked as highly meritorious, when it leads to the arrest of criminals that were disturbing the public peace. So whether an act is good or evil, should be judged by the effects produced by it and not from mere sentimentalism I think we should judge as to whether a certain act was good or bad, with due regard to the motives leading to that act, and also in consideration of the fact whether the said act had conduced to the well-being of a fellow creature or to his injury. But the ideal of speaking the truth only must be maintained to avoid evils resulting from a habit of speaking falsehood, these evils being far greater and extensive in effect than the good that is rarely done by an untruth. Besides, it is observed that one and the same act proves a blessing to one and a curse to another. The act of the tillage of ground so very necessary for the preservation of human life, is destructive to numerous insects and small animals; and the system of Vivisection in which a certain lymph is extracted after the dissection of a living animal, must be a source of intolerable pain to the poor animal, though it may be very efficacious in relieving human pain. But leaving aside all consideration of injury done to animals, if we consider those acts only as good which serve for the well-being of mankind, we come across such facts as do not allow us even then to hold this view. We may try to live a very honest life, but in the struggle for existence, we are forced to acts which though very honest by themselves, bear fruits decisively injurious to the interest of other fellow beings. Consequently, the utilitarian view of doing the greatest good to the greatest number of men (mark not

other creatures) stands to reason, though in the plane of relativity only, and not in the spiritual plane where no injury to anybody is permissible. Apart from acts for which a man is responsible to the society or to Government, there are certain other acts for which he is responsible to himself only, or to God if he is a religious man. But these acts too cannot be said as purely moral or purely immoral. For instance, a man lives with his cousin in the married state as husband and wife. This is a highly moral act to him, but to a man in whose case sexual connection with a cousin is an incest, it is highly immoral or rather a heinous sin. The first man's conscience will never prick him for committing that act, while the other man's conscience will certainly bite him in calm moments, though he may have committed the incestous act in the heat of passion. Now it is as the result of these reproaches of conscience or remorse only that an act bears fruit, and it must be said that where there is the moral sense, there alone is the idea of responsibility, the moral sense depending on the education of a man, teachings of his religion, conventions of the society to which he belongs and lastly on sentimentalism. This moral sense may be very blunt in some cases in which there are no reproaches of conscience; and therefore, no moral responsibility can attach in the case of human beings who have no conscience, and are consequently, no better than animals. In fact, a man of such a dull conscience should be regarded more an animal than a human being. But there are moments in every man's life when a remorse for his evil acts comes to him sooner or later, at least to a person who has a moral sense; and whenever there is an expression of this remorse, there is produced in his mind an impression of his act or a potentiality of its fruition, unless the man atones for it sincerely. Similarly, a good act also bears fruit when a man doing good takes the credit to himself for doing that good act, producing in him a notion of vanity and egotism; and according to our theory, even good acts when done with selfish motives or with feelings of vanity or egotism, bind a man to the world in the same way as do the

evil acts. All good acts being confined within a limited sphere of action and within a limited duration of time, must bear limited fruits only in the shape of further enjoyment of earthly or heavenly pleasures which have an end, and are followed by pain, the result of reaction. Such good acts limited as they are, cannot lead a man to the unending Absolute Bliss; but when a man rises above both his good and evil acts, then alone he can realise the Absolute Bliss. Verily ! a man who is unable to curb his evil passions is a coward, while the man who rises above the fruits of his good acts in consequence of doing those acts with perfect non-attachment to their fruits, is a hero and on the way to realization. Thus there is no existence of good or evil in the absolute sense, and it is our delusion or ignorance about the Reality that is responsible for the production of this nightmare of good and evil, and that has produced the idea of the existence of a Personal God as the origin of all that is good, and of a Satan or Devil as the author of all that is evil.

The Personal God may, however, be said to have an existence as the source of all that is good in the state of our ignorance about the Absolute, but the existence of evil, being due, as stated above, to the absence or to a lesser manifestation of good, there can be no such being as Satan or the Devil In Zorastrianism where there is the belief in the so-called dualism of the Good and the Evil Spirits, the latter, *i.e.*, Ahirman is said to be utterly ignorant in the beginning of the existence of the Good Spirit or Ahurmazda; and therefore, it can very well be said that the darkness of Evil is due to our having not seen the light of Good. Consequently, the Evil personified or Ahirman may be said to owe his existence to our ignorance only respecting the real existence of Ahurmazda, the Light of lights and the Source of all good. Now the question is, why is evil so rampant in the world ? The reply to this is that it is due to the intensity of our ignorance regarding the Reality, which has apparently no bound or limit. The conception of all these pairs of opposites lasts as long as our idea of relativity lasts,

i.e., as long as the *Atman* is not realized ; and when it is realized, there is all light for ever unchanged into darkness, and all bliss for ever unchanged into pain.

30. There is no idea of freedom or bondage in the Absolute of which man is the expression, but man is anyhow thinking himself as bound under the power of delusion, and he has, therefore, to make an effort to free himself from that bondage. Thus there has sprung up an idea of bondage and freedom in man. But bondage is not his real nature, he being but an expression of the Absolute wherein there is no bondage. When, however, he forgets his true nature and thinks himself in bondage, he is certainly a prisoner in the hands of his own *Karma*, reaping the fruits of his good and bad acts, both of which bind him, for a gold chain is after all a chain, as said by Swami Vivekananda, which serves to bind in the same way as does an iron chain. So by actions, good or evil, man is continuously forging fetters for himself, the good acts no doubt serving to diminish the potentialities of bad actions which themselves bear fruit in their own direction, and thus carrying him onwards in the stages of evolution. Good actions can, however, lead him to paradise, but never to freedom which is attained by true knowledge only respecting the Reality. The Absolute reflected in the *Jiva* or individual soul, is technically called the *Atman* which is a pure *Sakshin* or witness, and is neither an actor nor an enjoyer or sufferer, nor is contaminated, in any way, by the actions of the reflection (called technically *Chidabhas* or Ego). This Ego which, as stated above, is the reflection of the *Atman* and not the *Atman* itself wherein there is no idea of action or cause and effect, is really the actor, and therefore, the enjoyer of the fruits of its actions, and is consequently, under bondage When, however, it realizes that it is the pure *Atman* and not a reflection of it, free from all idea of bondage that produces the egotism of being an actor, then it is said to attain the true knowledge.

31. Now let us see what is *Maya* or Illusion, a word that has so often occurred in this treatise. Has it a beginning

and an end, or is it beginningless and without an end ? In fact, what is it after all ?

No beginning can be assigned to illusion or *Maya* as it is technically called, because no time can be fixed as to when it was a rope (in the oft quoted illustration of the snake in the rope) and when the illusion of the snake was produced therein. Had there been the knowledge of the rope previous to the illusion, there could not have been any illusion of the snake at all, but the knowledge of the rope only. The illusion, however, has an end on the knowledge of the real object. So *Maya* or illusion is beginningless, and this is also admitted by Herbert Spencer, as stated above; but it has an end, though this fact is not acknowledged by the said thinker, because in his opinion the Absolute is always and perfectly unknowable. But Sankara is more honest when he says that the question as regards the origin of *Maya*, can never be answered by a man who is himself enveloped by the veil of *Maya*, but by that man only who has had a realization of the Truth in *Samadhi*.

As *Maya* or illusion has always an end on the knowledge of the real object, it cannot be said to have that absolute existence which a thing existing at all times has, and which can only be said of *Brahman* or the Absolute Reality; but as it is perceived by the senses as long as it lasts, its existence though for a time only, cannot also be utterly denied. As regards the illusion of the *Jiva* produced in the Absolute *Brahman*, it may be said that as this illusion too like any other illusion, can have no beginning as stated above, and can have an end only on the knowledge of the Absolute Reality, which it is possible may not come to the *Jiva* for innumerable *Kalpas* (world ages), the said illusion of the *Jiva* and therefore, of the world exists for him, apparently, for all eternity and in all reality.

32. As regards the Supersensuous State produced by *Samadhi* in man, people of modern ways of thinking generally say that it is the result of hypnotism or hallucination only, if any such state is at all produced. We some time hear it said—" whether I am mad or those who call me

mad are themselves mad." This saying very well applies to these men. It cannot be that a thing of which I have no knowledge must necessarily be wrong There are many things of which we have no real knowledge at all in our present state of knowledge. Science too has not been able to explain all the mysteries of nature. So we too can bring a counter-charge against those who say that the Supersensuous state is but a hypnotism or hallucination. We say that they themselves are under the influence of hypnotism, having taken the only Reality that exists as something else, and they, therefore, must be de-hypnotized to realise that Reality. Those who are men of true realization, are the only men that are waking and all the others are in a dreaming state, dreaming of all this life of the world. They alone are sane and not mad. Theirs is the true sanity, if there is at all any sanity.

33. Our conclusion, therefore, is that surely the Abstract alone is true and not the Concrete, the Abstract being the source of all existences such as life, beauty, pleasure, etc., that are perceived in the concrete objects; but to those only who have realized the Abstract Beauty or Bliss in the state of *Samadhi*, is known what that Beauty or Bliss is, what grandeur or sublimity there is in the *Atman*. To those who are still in the state of Relativity, the Concrete has its own charms, perhaps not less than what the Abstract possesses Sri Krishna the Concrete Manifestation of the absolute Divinity is no less beautiful and has no less grandeur than the *Atman* or the Absolute itself. Besides, there is a manifestation of that Divine love in Him which attracts, like a magnet drawing iron filings, the individual soul full of intense longing for union with His Divine Self.

Similarly, a flower looks very beautiful which, according to our theory, owes all its charms to the Abstract Beauty getting an expression through the mind of the perceiver. It is also concrete. How passionately we prize it for its beauty though the beauty is not intrinsically its own. This beauty of the concrete flower is so captivating that we heartily welcome our hypnotization into the thought that the

beauty lies in the flower itself and not outside of it. So by an adherence to the concrete thoughts of beauty and bliss, we can more easily reach the conception of the abstract Beauty and Bliss than through the realization of it in the Abstract itself.

34. So far we have discussed, in detail, the spirit theory of the *Vedanta* dealing with abstract conceptions which alone are regarded as true. Let us now see briefly what is its opposite theory, *viz.*, the materialistic theory which deals with the conception of the concrete only said to have alone a real existence. The materialistic theory contents itself with the belief in the sole existence of the ever-changing but indestructable matter of which the highest development is the mind which is also ever changing. According to this belief, there is and there can be no such thing as an unchangeable substance usually known under the name of soul or God. Matter has the same permanence as the soul or God has in the spirit theory, though it is ever changing from one state into another. Mind is the ultimate product of matter and all intellectual, mental and moral faculties are considered as lying in it only, varying with the development of the brain, but there is no such thing as a soul beyond it According to the *Vedanta* also, mind or *Buddhi*, *i e*, the intellect is a fine or subtle state of matter, subtler than the ether itself, which, however, being ever-changing, cannot be said to have that unchangeable reality which belongs to the spirit only ; and all the intellectual, moral and mental faculties possessed by it, are but reflections of the absolute *Chit* which is the ultimate source of all relative knowledge. In the *Vedanta*, however, in opposition to the view of the materialistic theory, matter is said to manifest itself in the various stages of evolution from subtle into gross forms at the time of the manifestation of the world from the Deity, the reverse of this taking place at the time of involution when the manifestation of the universe is absorbed in the Deity. This perfectly stands to reason in a theory wherein the Deity is regarded as the ultimate source of the world. In the strict metaphysical sense,

however, nothing can proceed from a Being where there is no idea of action or cause and effect; and there is, consequently, no creation or dissolution of the world in the real sense, both the ideas having their root in *Maya* or our illusion only.

35. Consequently, our final solution of the mystery is that of the three theories about God and the Universe stated in the beginning of this chapter, the first only is acceptable to reason, that is, the sole existence either of ever-changing Matter without an unchanging substratum of it, called soul or God, or of unchangeable Spirit without any changeable manifestation of it having a reality, commonly known as Matter, can reasonably be proved, having regard to the conceptions of the eternity and the infinity of both. Two things that are eternal and infinite at the same time, can not be considered to have an absolute existence. Both the theories are intrinsically atheistic, but the spirit theory of the *Vedanta* affords a greater consolation and solace, inasmuch as it holds out the ideal of a Personal God existing in the state of relativity, who is to all intents and purposes, as true and as real as we consider our own individuality to be real.

That there is a Reality cannot be denied, which however, can be of one substance only, either of Spirit or of Matter. There can never be more than one Reality, as what is called Ultimate Truth, can be one and one only, and if any other reality is perceived by the senses, it must be according to the spirit theory of the *Vedanta*, phenomenal or illusory only, having no absolute existence. Idealism also can never be true in the absolute sense.

Modern science which has as yet attempted to solve the mysteries of the Phenomena alone, regarding them to be the only reality, has come to the conclusion, as the result of the scientific experimental research, that matter and energy both are uncreatable and indestructable. The question now is: Is the principle of consciousness the existence of which cannot be denied, alone unconserved, considering

that we are able to realize the conservation of matter and energy through it only ? The conservation of consciousness cannot, however, be proved experimentally ; but it is quite unreasonable to think that while it is a fact that we have the proof of the conservation of matter and energy through our consciousness only, consciousness alone is unconserved, *i.e.*, to say, it does not exist after death. Matter and force are, therefore, both mere states of consciousness beyond which they cannot be said to have any independent or absolute existence. What causes this principle of consciousness to assume these states, is of course a cogent metaphysical question, and the answer to it may be found in the Ideas of Plato or in the *Prakriti* of Kapila or in the *Maya* of the *Vedanta*, but there cannot be any hesitation in holding that the conservation of matter and energy conclusively establishes the immortality of the principle of consciousness. According to the *Adwaita Vedanta*, an individual consciousness through which alone the conservation of matter and energy is proved, and of which they are mere states only, is but a reflection of the one Absolute Consciousness wherein, however, there is no consciousness of an external thing like matter or force having a reality, for a belief in the eternal existence of more than one substance having a reality and an infinity is utterly absurd and quite opposed to reason. *Vedanta* admits the theory of the conservation of matter or energy not in any absolute sense, but in the relative sense only, or in other words, as long as there is an individual consciousness to conceive of it. Consequently, the spirit theory of the Vedanta is quite reasonable, as it does explain the mysteries of nature more plausibly than any other.

III. WAYS TO REALISATION.

36. But enough of this verbosity and vain talk. They do not bring in any realization. In order to remove the darkness of ignorance, the light of knowledge must be brought in. Let this demon of darkness be first slain by the powers of Light, *i.e.*, by true knowledge, and then only the *Atman* will shine in all its glory. There are several ways to reach this goal of realization. Some resort to asceticism, killing thereby the sensual and animal desires within them that are great hinderances in the way of realization. Some who are true philanthropists try to seek the relief of distress without any desire for fame or name, their actions being guided by complete disinterestedness, annihilating their self for the self of the All which is also the Self of the Universe Some seek the grace of the Personal God through their devotion towards Him. This is by far the easiest way. They love all that is sublime and beautiful, and their God too is full of love. So there is a great attractiveness in this particular path which naturally tends to concentrate their minds on the personality of the Concrete God, particularly Sri Krishna who is the Universal Ideal of Love and who himself is Love Personified. What is this devotion or *Bhakti* ? It is the intense longing of the individual soul for union with the Divine Essence. When the devotion becomes very deep and the love of the devotee towards his God knows no bounds, all feelings of separateness die out of themselves, and the result is perfect communion of the soul with the Supreme, in which state only the illusion of separateness having ceased to exist, there is the realization of the perfect identity of the soul with the Divine Essence. Let us here see briefly what is this grand ideal of love as understood by the Hindus.

37. *Bhakti* or Love for God has three stages which are as follows :—

(1) First stage when a devotee regarding himself as a servant of God says : "I am His." This is illustrated by the *Bhakti* of Hanuman towards Rama.

(2) Second stage when a lover of God says :—"He is mine" or more correctly speaking, "He is exclusively mine." This is illustrated by the love which the Gopis had for Sri Krishna. Each Gopi regarded Sri Krishna to be hers and hers only.

(3) Third stage when a devotee reaches that state of extreme madness or depth of love wherein he says :— "I am He." This is illustrated by the *Bhakti* of Prahlada.

38. Apparently, no great stress can be laid on the *Bhakti Marga*, or the Path of love, as it is called, in view of the strict teachings of the *Vedanta*, wherein the reality of the Personal God is not acknowledged. There are men calling themselves strict *Adwaitas* who look with a scornful eye upon the devotion of the so-called *Bhaktas* or lovers of God, for a Being who is after all an imaginary one in the strict metaphysical sense. But it is better that these objectors should understand that the people whom they look upon with scorn do not care for their definition of the Reality. They are absorbed in the Love of God, and are sincerely devoted to Him, and that is enough for them. They wish to taste the sugar and not to become sugar.

Let these people who take objections to the *Bhakti Marga*, also know that both the ways to Realization are true according to the Scriptures. In one, Realization is attained through *Gnana* or knowledge of the identity of one's individual self with the Universal Self, the person treading this path at first fixing his mind on any single concrete object and thus gradually increasing his powers of concentration, until a time is reached when the activity of the mind completely ceases, and there is no thought of self-consciousness even, that consciousness being gradually merged into the Universal Consciousness, both being realized as one and the same Entity having no consciousness of any thing external, there being none. The other

path is just the reverse of this, by following which the same realization is equally attained through what is called *Dhyana* or through incessant meditation upon some lovely or beautiful image of the Divine Beloved, either placed before the eyes or pictured in the mind. The result of this incessant stream of thought directed to that image or to that mental picture of it, is that the meditator or the devotee gradually divests himself of all other thoughts except that of his Divine Beloved, by degrees losing himself entirely in the thought of his God, after which all idea of separateness from Him is annihilated, He being realized as one with him.

39. The *Vedanta*, therefore, does not ask people to have a blind belief in the existence of the Impersonal or Personal God, merely in view of the arguments proving His existence. It says that God must be realized by every body for himself, and not to be believed in on mere hearsay or with regard to any arguments adduced. Vain talks will never do. For His realization you have not to seek Him in temples, mosques or churches, but in the temple of your own hearts In fact, a Divine Vision of the Personal God, or a realization of the Impersonal in *Samadhi*, has been the chief theme of Hindu Scriptures from time immemorial, which means complete freedom from bondage, the bondage of *Maya* or Matter. The note was first of all struck by that most ancient record of the Aryan race, *viz.*, the *Rig Veda*, wherein the truth of the Unity of God was for the first time proclaimed to the world, taken up afterwards by the *Upanishads* which chanted that mystical song of *Tattvamasi* (That thou art), revealing to its hearers the ultimate and the grandest Truth of the essential identity of the individual with the Supreme Soul, a song that has ever since reverberated through works of philosophy and religion. What was taught as abstract in philosophy, has been explained as concrete in the *Puranas*.

People boast now-a-days of freedom, of individual liberty. Have they any real freedom looking to their

actual condition ? There is a tyranny of custom, tyranny of fashion, tyranny of etiquette and similar other tyrannies, to say nothing of inner passions that make a prey of the heart, all forging fetters for those that are under their thraldom. Can they, in such circumstances, say that they are free ?

40. For all these *Yogas* as they are called, complete renunciation is necessay, renunciation of all regards for self, renunciation of all desires and finally renunciation of all the fruits of actions. The question is, what is the chief obstacle in the way of true realization? The greatest obstacle or hinderance in the way of realization, is our own mind and its activities. The mind is compared to a lake in which waves are constantly rising and falling. The disturbances produced in this lake of mind, are due to incessant external influences that have no end. The *Atman* is compared to the sun, shining in all its glory, of which a reflection is produced in the lake of mind. When the water of a lake is disturbed and there are waves produced in it constantly rising and falling, the reflection of the sun therein is not at all steady, and therefore, there is little or no brilliancy in it. Similarly, the reflection of the *Atman*, which is no other than the Ego or the lower self, in any such lake of mind as is subject to incessant disturbances by external causes, is far from being steady, reflecting little or no glory of it. Of course, the reflection is there, but it has little or no brilliancy. Again the mind may be compared to a mirror more or less transparent, nay even in some cases, almost opaque, rendering the image of the *Atman* produced therein almost indistinct. Where the lake of mind is incessantly disturbed or where the mirror is almost opaque, the reflection of the *Atman*, though it is there, being quite unsteady or indistinct, has little or no brilliancy sufficient to reflect the glory of the original. In such a mind there is the least expression of the Divinity ; and consequently, the Ego does not at all realize its divine nature, as the idea of egotism is fully predominant in it,

matter being preponderate over spirit. On the other hand, where the lake of mind is perfectly calm undisturbed by mental waves, or the mirror of mind is completely transparent, there the reflection of the *Atman* is quite brilliant, in which case there is the manifestation of the Divinity in all its glory, and the idea of all egotism is entirely annihilated, spirit being preponderate over matter. Intellectual giants, men who have made discoveries in science or indulged in grand metaphysical and philosophical thoughts, can also be classed with these people, though they may not have had any high notion of spirituality or a belief in the sole existence of the *Atman;* as in their cases too, there must have been the fullest expression of the absolute Knowledge which is the ultimate source of all relative knowledge. Theirs also must have been a *Yogic* state when they made such discoveries in science, etc. This highest state is realized by the *Yogins* only in whom the brilliancy of the reflection of the Divinity varies with the power of *Yoga* or asceticism. Such a person having the reflection of the *Atman* in the mirror of his mind in all its brilliancy, is called a *Jivan Mukta*, realizing almost the Absolute Bliss in this very life. Between these two extreme states of mind as described above, there are gradations wherein the reflection of the *Atman* varies in intensity with the varying forces of the disturbing elements, the Ego in such a state having a belief in the grace of God (regarded as a separate Entity) as well as in his own self.

41. But howsoever the reflection may shine in all its brilliancy in the state of *Jivan Muktas*, the reflection is after all a reflection which is unreal, and therefore, the element of unreality is not entirely destroyed, though the *Yogin* whose mind is fully concentrated on the *Atman* itself and not on its reflection, regards it as completely unreal. In such a state, a *Jivan Mukta* cannot be said to have attained to final Realization. He may however say that I am in Him and He is in me, singing with the sages of *Upanishads* :—

I am the Unseen Spirit which informs
All subtle essences ! I flame in fire,
I shine in sun and moon, planets and stars !
I blow with the winds, roll with the waves !
I am the man and woman, youth and maid !
The babe new born, the withered ancient propped
Upon his staff ! I am whatever is !
The black bee and the tiger and the fish !
The seasons and the seas ! In Me they are,
In Me begin and end !

Or with Emerson :—

I hide in the solar glory,
I am dumb in the pealing song,
I rest on the pitch of the torrent,
In slumber I am strong.

42. There is, however, a further and grander state of Realization in which the element of mind is entirely annihilated, the annihilation taking place at the time of the final dissolution of the body, both gross and subtle, which is not repeated again in any subsequent birth, that being impossible for a man of perfect Realization. In this state, there is no longer any reflection of the *Atman*, there being no mind to reflect it, and therefore, in such a state only, it can be said that there is the *Atman* alone and nothing else, and then alone a man finally realizes that "I am He and He is I," although there is no separate individual to say so. This is called the state of *Videh Mukti*. There is, however, a difference of opinion as regards the *Jiwan* and the *Videh Muktis*.

43. Woe to us ! that notwithstanding that the Ganges of nectar or the water of immortality is perennially flowing within us, we are resorting to filthy ponds and tanks to quench our thirst. Like the deer that has got a store of musk in his own navel and is in vain wandering about hills and forests in order to discover the source of the scent, we having the Divinity in ourselves, have as if lost it, and are vainly searching for a God in temples,

mosques and churches. There was a time in India, when this sun of the *Atman* was shining in all its glory, casting its light not only on the highest peaks of the mountain of humanity, but also on the low lands and ravines, dispelling the darkness of ignorance from every cave or grotto, illumining every corner of it. But woe to the present condition of the country ! when the same sun is now seen as almost covered up by thick clouds of utter illusion produced by teachings of the present age, which is casting a deep shadow of scepticism on the highest hills and low lands alike. Occasionally, however, a few stars appear to relieve this intense darkness, reflecting the light of the big Luminary for a time, men like Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rama Tirtha, etc., etc.

44. As regards the *Atman*, the great poet and *Bhakta* of the Northern India, Tulsidas says :—"I may hear it, I may meditate upon it, I may understand it, and I may also lecture on it, still what is it I am quite unable to realize in heart." When a person of such a high saintly character says so, and no doubt it is not the fortune of every one to have a realization of the *Atman*, we frail human beings have no other course than to seek the grace of the Personal God. Let us then choose the easiest course, and having at heart the love for a Concrete Manifestation of Him, let us then all sing with the Gopees the following song :—

Love produces Love, Love helps one to cross the ocean of life ;

Love sustains the world, and Love is the source of true Realization ;

Faith in Love may lead one to Realization in life,

But my sincere Love will carry me to the feet of my Krishna ;

But this too is attainable only when one is prepared to obliterate himself in the path of God. as the Persian Poet sings :—

Until thou art reduced to dust and potters make a goblet of it,
Thou shalt never kiss the lips of the Beloved.
Until thou art pounded like *Henna* under a stone,
Thou shalt never reach the feet of the Beloved.

IV. WHAT IS TRUE RENUNCIATION.

45. We have said above that unless a man obliterates himself in the path of God, he can never aspire to reach His holy feet This does not mean any bodily destruction, but an annihilation of all desires within one's self, the annihilation of all regard for self. What are these desires ? There are two Sanskrit words : (1) *Vasana* and (2) *Trishna*. *Vasana* constitutes what are called the germs of unfulfilled desires, traces or impressions of which are left in the mind with a potentiality of fruition. *Trishna* is the intense thirst or craving for further fulfilment of desires. As long as there is *Vasana* or a germ of desire in the mind, a hankering for the fulfilment of the unsatisfied desires springs up over again with renewed vigour, leading to the production of what is called *trishna* or a burning thirst for further desires. The mind will thus be continually tossing up and down, and there will be no rest or peace for it, which alone can bring about a cessation of all desires. The more you seek the fulfilment of desires, the more the thirst for them increases. It is said that *Vasana* or the germ of desires can be killed by fulfilment of desires that have not been satisfied, as it is produced only when a particular desire has not been fulfilled. This is, however, not correct, as no sooner a particular desire is satisfied than a thirst for further fulfilment of the said or other desires at once springs up, *i.e.*, it gives rise to *trishna*, and thus there is no end of desires. The only and the best way of killing all *Vasanas* or mental desires, is that all the activities of mind should be stopped by concentrating it on one object, particularly on the Divine Person of God, in whose Divine love all other thoughts should be completely forgotten. *Trishna* is inconquerable as long as one seeks to satisfy it, and it can be conquered only when one does not seek fulfilment of desires. It is perfectly true that desires are seldom fulfilled as long as one is feeling desires, but no

sooner a man is above desires, or say no sooner he becomes indifferent as to whether they are satisfied or not, than the objects of desires themselves seek him. It is very seldom that prayers preferred with any amount of earnestness of mind are at once granted, and whenever a prayer is granted, it must be the result either of the supplicant becoming indifferent about his request, though for a time only, or of the prayer itself not having been preferred with any amount of earnestness. The more a man devotes himself heart and soul to the fulfilment of his desires, the more he meets with failure, success evading him at every step. The mere saying by mouth that you have given up all desires or you have become indifferent about them, while you are a prey to *Vasanas* or germs of desires within yourself internally, does not indicate that you have become above desires. This object is not secured by any outward renunciation of desires, in deeds or in words, but by a complete mental renunciation, which can only be produced where there are no more *Vasanas* or mental desires to fructify. A complete renunciation of everything that stimulates desires, will alone produce in you a state of perfect desirelessness. No body whose object is to test the truth in order to see whether his desires are satisfied or not, if he rises above them, can make the experiment, because the experiment itself would mean that he is after fulfilment of desires. When desires are fulfilled in the event of a man becoming completely above desires, the effects of such desires are not left behind, and therefore, there being no more *Vasanas* or mental potentialities, there is no more thirst for them in him. Says Swami Rama Tirtha : "Whenever a man begins to love an object or any body, anything material, he is allowed to enjoy it for a time, but just when that love for that object gets instilled in his very heart, the object is at once removed." This is perfectly true. There are instances on record that in cases of intense fondness for children or wives or mistresses, the objects of love have suddenly been removed by death or

otherwise. Why is it so? It is because the object is loved for the object's sake and not for the Divinity behind. Says the Swami "Woe to the man who does not apply the love he has learnt at the feet of his wife to the Divinity behind!" If in loving objects, our love is pure and is directed only to the Divinity behind, then there is no such sudden removal of the beloved objects as has been described above. In this way alone, we can prosper in our love, and at the same time, reach to the true love of God Love for God is expressed in two ways, *i.e.*, either for a special Concrete Manifestation of Him, such as Sri Krishna, or for all that are considered as His manifestations, that is, for all living beings within whom He is ever present. In that case your love should not be confined to any particular being, for then it will be an impure love only. You will then love the outward object and not the Divinity behind it Your love should take the shape of a Universal Love. Even your love for your wife should be in the light of true love for the Divinity only that is present in her; and in that case alone, you will not bemoan her loss or bereavement. Such is the ideal of a Universal Love. A real *Premi* or an ardent lover of God who has completely forgotten himself in His love, sees his Beloved in everything. Then there is all love for him and nothing else. Then love, lover and the Beloved all the three become one. According to the *Vedanta*, this state is not produced by any delusion or by the depth of love as it is said, but on the contrary, it is actually the case, for the lover and the Beloved are in reality one and the same.

46. As already stated, *Vedanta* does not recognize sin in man, as inherent in his nature. Man is essentially a pure and perfect being. Whatever imperfection or impurity there is in man, is due to a thick covering of an illusion that has made him regard himself as an impure or a sinful being. This illusion has as it apparently enveloped the glory and darkened the purity of the soul which is, however, not tainted by any such covering. One has to

take off or remove this external covering, this thick veil of ignorance in order to realize that he is a pure being. This ignorance may very well be called the original sin, the cause of the fall of man from his divine pedastal, it alone being the cause of the manifestation of the world and the consequent misery found in it. In the Bible, it is said that the original sin in man owes its existence to the disobedience of the First Parents in eating the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge, while in the *Vedanta*, the belief is that this original sin, *i.e.*, the ignorance, owes its existence to the man having eaten the fruit of the tree of delusion, which can at once be destroyed by his eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The idea that he is a sinner, that he is an impure being, in fact, this dread of sin, is the source of all evil and misery in the world. In the first place, as already stated, there is no such thing as sin in the absolute sense, for what is regarded as sin by some is a very meritorious and highly virtuous act in the eye of others, as for instance, marriage with a cousin which is a heinous sin among the Hindus, is a highly meritorious act among other communities. If we, however, prefer to be deluded into the idea that we have fallen, then we are certainly sinners, and have to suffer for our sins, our fall being of course due to our forgetting our true nature; and in that case, our *Vasanas* or impure mental desires alone are to blame and not God's creation in any way. Some people say that because there is the fascination of women or of gold as the medium of fulfilling desires, which serves to allure even a saint away from the path of God, they are unable to lead the life of righteousness. So long as they have *Vasanas* or mental desires in them, desires for carnal pleasures, they cannot avoid their fall, even though no woman crosses their way. To say the truth, it is our weakness or lack of moral courage to realize our true nature which is to blame for our fall. Weakness is the cause of sin, sickness and sorrow. Because one lacks moral courage to resist the temptations that allure him to

commit sinful acts or to partake of dainty dishes, he succumbs to sin or to sickness, as the direct result of his weakness. It will perhaps be said that a heroic courage is required to commit certain heinous sins or crimes. No doubt, there is sometimes an exhibition of cowardice and bravery side by side in one and the same person, when on the way of committing a serious crime or a heinous sin—on the one hand, cowardice in not being able to resist the temptation of committing the crime, and on the other, the courage of braving the society's voice or the authority of the Police. But though he may have enjoyments for a time as the result of his courage, his weakness in not being able to resist the temptation of committing the sinful or criminal act, directly ruins him perhaps for ever.

47. In fact, it is contended by the advocates of absolute renunciation that love for gold or women is a great hinderance in the way of Realization ; and therefore, men should be *Tyagis* or renouncers from their very childhood, in order to attain that state. Such men as have already known sense pleasures, can never be freed from all attachment to carnal thoughts. As an illustration, it is said that the smell of garlic once permeating a vessel, can never be completely removed, howsoever you wash it. Now let us see how far is this contention true ?

At first it must be borne in mind that no one whether a child or a grown up man is absolutely free from attachment to sense pleasures, as otherwise he would be free and not bound, and there would be no need for him to strive for freedom or *Moksha*. Every man is born with the seeds of his acts, both good and evil, to sprout forth and bear fruit in his new life; and therefore, there is potentially in him a germ of attachment to sense pleasures, a *Vasana* or a seed of desires that have remained unfulfilled and that must fructify in the new life or lives to come. Consequently, an adherence to the Shastric injunction requiring a man to pass through all the four stages of life or *asaramas*, alone will lead a man to the life of complete renunciation which

is attained in *Samvasa* or the fourth stage, all his *Vasanas* having been burnt up by satiation in his life as a householder and by a series of asceticism undergone in his life as a hermit or *Vanaprastha*. If even in his life as a house-holder, he is unattached to the fruits of his actions, enjoying all legitimate pleasures and keeping his mind completely free from their thraldom, he will thereby, facilitate his further upward career, and will easily attain the *Moksha* or freedom. To live in the world and be unattached to it, is the grandest ideal that has been preached in the *Gita*. A wife should serve as a helpmate of the husband in all his religious works, and he should expect her to help him in his spiritual progress, instead of considering her as an instrument for the gratification of his sensual pleasures only, thus causing his own fall. In the Shastras a wife is designated as *Sahdharmini*, *i.e.*, a helpmate of the husband in religion. If right relations are maintained between husbands and wives, then a woman will no longer be a dread as she is looked upon by some people.

48. Now-a-days men who abstain from food touched by certain hands are seen to be boasting of a life of renunciation. If this were a true renunciation, then persons having the blackest hearts and committing all sorts of condemnable acts, would be *tyagis* or renouncers, if they only abstained from food touched by forbidden hands, or resorted to certain outward formalities of religion. Such men act strictly to the letter of the Shastric commandments regarding *Saucha* or cleanliness and other matters, and never to the spirit of those ordinances. As a matter of fact, men wishing to live a pure and spiritual life are warned against certain acts of commission as well as of omission, and are forbidden to partake of food, earned through unlawful means, or touched by a class of people that are ordinarily leading an immoral or filthy life, as food so earned and so touched, is calculated to retard their progress towards the attainment of the ideal of a pure and spiritual life. Is it not ridiculous, therefore, that

a man himself leading an immoral life should be very scruplous as to who serves his food or who touches him? A man must first deserve a thing before he can claim it. In recommending or say in enjoining a life of hard discipline to be led by a house-holder, the object of the Shastras is that he should accustom himself to certain austerities, whereby he can cleanse his heart from the dross of sin that is attached to his soul in the ordinary pursuits of life. Where this is not the object, but on the contrary, a much greater filth of sin is being daily attached to the soul, all these strict scruples as regards food etc, are mere child's play and nothing more.

V.—THE ETHICS OF THE VEDANTA.

49. There are some ignorant critics of the *Vedanta* as a religion and philosophy, who are ever forward in asserting that the *Vedanta* takes no heed of morality, and does away with man's moral responsibility. For instance, it is said that in the state of *Jivan mukti* or Realization in life, the person attaining that state is, according to this system of philosophy, no more responsible for his actions, as it is considered impossible for the actions committed by him after his attaining true knowledge to bear fruit. Further, when every man is God or a manifestation of God, or in other words, the self of the one is the self of the other, every one can, acting on the above principle, lay claim to and enjoy another's property equally with him. This is the general tenor of reasoning adopted by such critics But be it carefully noted by these people that the acts of a person who has attained true knowledge, committed by him in the state of Realization, are never done through any motive or interest serving as an incentive to their commission, all motives and all idea of self-interest and even the motive of doing good to others being utterly extinguished in him, but do rather follow in their natural course in consequence of the *Sanskaras* or potentialities of the acts of his previous births bearing fruit in this life. Consequently, no responsibility for such acts can ever attach him. In the ordinary ethics too, acts that are done with pure disinterestedness, free from all selfish motives, do not impose any moral responsibility on the doer, if the said acts have touched injuriously, in any way, the interest of some people or class of people.

As regards the contention that the *Vedanta* does not recognize property rights of individuals, it is a question that has been very ably and logically answered by the late revered Swami Ram Thirtha whose lectures on the subject may advantageously be read. These people should also

understand that the *Vedantic* ethics do not apply to those who have not attained perfect Realization, for in their cases, the Shastric commandments and the consequent penalties for their transgression, are fully in force. A man of true realization and renunciation will not covet at all any property, much less the property belonging to others. In the case of those, however, who are practical *Vedantists* and who do possess property, they will be quite glad to permit others to share in their property, in the same way as they would themselves like to share in any other's property, on the principle that whatever property is there, is the property of all and not of any particular individual. But it must be remembered that the *Vedanta* does not encourage the life of a drone in society, for it is the first principle of the teachings of the *Gita* that no one should ever remain inactive, and that every one should work for the work's sake and not for any return from it, doing his work with perfect non-attachment to its fruits. If he works exclusively for himself, then it is better for him not to work at all. He must, however, work not for himself alone, but for the good of all who are also, essentially, his own self and thus contribute to the wealth of the society before he can claim a share in it. As regards participation in each other's wife (another hit of our critics) it should be clearly understood that a wife does not form the husband's property as is generally regarded, but is his half self in the emperical and his own true self in the metaphysical sense. Besides, a man of Realization loves even his own wife not for the wife's sake, but for the Divinity within her; and he is, therefore, quite welcome to love another's wife for the Divinity within her, and not with any carnal inclination for her.

50. To speak the truth, the *Vedantic* ethics contain the true principles of morality, and nowhere can be found such grand ideas of morality as are found in this particular system of philosophy. For instance, there is a moral

law inculcated by Christianity in the famous precept—"Love thy neighbour as thyself." But why should I do so? My neighbour is different from myself and his pleasures and pains are not mine, nor mine his. Dr. Deussen of Germany assures us that "the answer is not in the Bible, but is in the *Veda*, in the great formula of *tattvamasi* or "That thou art." The highest and purest morality is the immediate consequence of the *Vedanta*."

It is the natural outcome of our delusion in our regarding ourselves as distinct personalities, the production of *Maya*, that there is a frantic struggle for self-maintenance and self-enjoyment, leading to acts repugnant to the sound principles of true morality. Says the *Ka ha Upanishad*:—"The right (*Sreya*) is one thing, the pleasant (*Preya*) another. These two being distinct objects, present themselves before man. Of the two, it is well for him who chooses the right, and who chooses the pleasant, the sweet, goes wide of the aim. Yea, the wise sifts the two and prefers the right to the sweet The fool takes the sweet to hold and retain." The *Upanishadic* wisdom alone teaches us that he who realizes Self in all beings and all beings in Self, thenceforth grieves not any more. A man, therefore, shall love his neighbour as himself only, because his neighbour is really himself in essence and not separate from him. Consequently, we quote again from Dr. Deussen who says :—

"The *Vedanta* in its unfalsified form is the strongest support of pure morality, is the great consolation in the sufferings of life and death."

51. The doctrine of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence, takes no regard of this sound view of the *Vedanta*, being as it is a materialistic solution of the problem. If the problem is approached in the true spirit of the ethics of the *Vedanta*, the ruthless course adopted by modern nations in the extirpation of the weak by the strong, will never be justified any longer. This doctrine may very well hold good so far as Cosmic evolution is

concerned, wherein millions of weaker lives that are unable to defend themselves against the stronger, are allowed to perish, in order that nature's equilibrium may be maintained. But in the case of man who is a reasoning and moral being, and who is also gifted with certain intellectual powers, enabling him to vanquish nature itself, and thus evade nature's whims, though not entirely, any such plea that it is natural for the strong to prey upon the weak, can hardly be advocated or defended. Further, the doctrine is not at all tenable for a moment, when man is once granted to be a spiritual and a religious being also. The chief aim of the *Vedantic* ethics is to regard others as one's own self, and if one has any desire for the preservation of self, he must take care also that no injury is done to others, as otherwise the interests of that man's self also will equally suffer; for any acts of injury done to others that are also his own self, will certainly redound upon him sooner or later.

Evolution as further understood by modern thinkers consists in the elimination from the sphere of existence, of all who do not deserve to exist in consequence of their weakness and other defects, physical as well as intellectual, that bar the progress of humanity towards higher and higher stages of physical and intellectual development. Those that are likely to retard that progress or at least to contaminate, in any way, the physical and intellectual growth of man, have no right to live and to endanger by their evil examples, the development of others that have a fitness for a higher evolution. The *Vedanta*, however, cannot support any such doctrine, as all men, be they strong or weak, physically, morally, intellectually or spiritually, must have a chance for rising higher and higher, until the highest goal is reached, wherein the identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self is realized, and which is the ultimate aim of man's life. Consequently, the aim of our life should be to render such help to the so-called weak as may be necessary for their uplifting to higher stages, whether physical, moral, intellectual or spiritual.

52. Evolution, in the *Vedantic* sense, consists in the gradual development of certain elements existing potentially in a living being As already stated, a living being is a composite of causal, subtle and gross bodies, as they are called, with a reflection of the Absolute *chetan* in what is called *ajnana* or ignorance which is the cause of all embodiment. The subtle body is called *Linga Sharira*, and it is this that accompanies the soul from birth to birth to all eternity, unless *moksha* or salvation is attained This vestment of the soul is, in fact, a permanent factor, subject, however, to certain internal fluctuations, but otherwise, as a body, completely unchangeable. No element of it is destroyed, and no new element is ever added to it. It has in it, as permanent entities, seeds of bodily organs and other potentialities of the physical growth of the gross body, with seeds of all inner faculties, such as mind and intellect etc., and finally a moral set or seeds of works done by the individual soul in its previous births. Now evolution means a development of certain elements, already existing potentially, and not a development of which there is no potentiality already. In our theory, evolution or its reverse the involution, takes place under the effects of the seeds of actions done by the soul, which influence its life. Evil acts lead to what is called a contraction of the *Linga Sharira* or the subtle body, in which case certain elements of it become latent and are not, therefore, at all expressed at the time of the soul taking its birth in a new body. Consequently, it is born in a body with a less development whether physical, intellectual, moral or spiritual; and being thus less gifted, it is unable to strive for a higher life. On the other hand, good acts lead to an expansion of the subtle body, by virtue of which all its elements come into full play, causing the birth of the individual in a body with higher developments, thus enabling him to strive for higher and higher life. In short, in our theory, *Karma* is the chief factor, which leads not, only to development to higher stages, but also to what is

called retrogression or involution, in the lowest stage of which, all the elements of the subtle body become completely latent, and this state is reached in the vegetable or say in the mineral kingdom. Herein the soul gets as if pent up in a prison, on account of which all further progress is stopped, until it is released from it after due expiation of its sins. The highest stage of development is reached in man whose actions alone bear fruit, as in him only has developed the sense of moral responsibility, rendering him liable to punishment or reward. In fact, it is man only who by virtue of his evil acts is born in a lower species, wherein all his faculties that have been developed so far in his progress towards the stage of humanity, remain in a latent or dormant state, until after an expiation of his sins, he again reverts to his state as man, passing through intermediate stages of life. Again, it is man only who by virtue of his good acts rises to higher states of humanity or to the state of the so-called *Devas*, or who by giving up all attachment to the fruits of actions or say by rising above his acts, attains to the state of Divinity where the highest transcendental state is reached.

It is observed in this world of relativity that every action has a reaction equal and opposite, or a rise is followed by a fall also equal and opposite, and *Vice Versa*. Consequently, unless a man has attained the transcendental state described above, from which there is no retrogression, there is a possibility of his going downward again, the depth of his fall depending both on the degree of his intellectual or spiritual development and the nature of his sins. The higher the intellectual or spiritual development of a man, and the greater the enormity of his sins, the lower is his descent downwards, as the reaction that follows the commission of a heinous deed must be in proportion to its heinousness, and at the same time commensurate with the intellectual or spiritual development of the man, producing a corresponding contraction of the subtle body. He is, therefore, born in a lower species, in consequence of his

sins and crimes which often times are very shameful or rather a disgrace to humanity, acts which make him deserve the life of a brute rather than that of a human being The body of the brute serves as a prison for him, whereby a restraint is placed as if on his power of doing further mischief, as brutes are not capable of doing acts that a man often does After his release from this temporary confinement, which takes place as soon as his crimes and sins have been expiated, he reverts to his state as man, free to strive for a still higher life Thus it is after a series of downward and upward carreer, due to a man's evil and good acts respectively, that a time comes for his final evolution into the perfect state of Godhead, as the door to this highest stage of evolution is ever open for all beings, be they virtuous or sinners, the virtuous reaching the goal sooner and the sinner after passing through innumerable births and deaths.

People generally abhor the idea of a man who is regarded as the lord of creation, being born as a lower animal. But why should there be any such abhorrence, as long as a man is guilty of acts that take him to an animal's life. He ought to be ashamed of his acts, and it is certainly in his power that he be never born as an animal. Does honour consist in being a man and living the life of an animal, or in being an animal but living a life perhaps better than that of a man of his character, for there are certain species of animals that live almost a celebate life, the instances of connubial infidility being very rare among them? Indeed, the animal's states into which a man passes in consequence of his evil acts, serve as prisons whereby all further evolution is retarded, until he is released from them, and this is certainly the greatest punishment conceivable, and the greatest misfortune for a being who is essentially free and unbound.

Consequently, according to our theory, it is on account of changes in the physical body assumed by an individual being, which is but a counterpart of his subtle body, and

which varies in development with the variations produced in that body in consequence of the individual's *Karma*, that evolution and involution goes on from one species into another, through what is called metempsychosis and not otherwise, and this apparently to all eternity or at least until the individual attains the transcendental state, after which there is no further evolution or involution.

The modern theory of evolution, however, which is a materialistic solution only of the problem of life, takes no regard of the spiritual development that is going on side by side with the physical and intellectual evolution.

In this connection it may be mentioned here that there are two divergent views as regards the question whether our successes in life are due entirely to our own exertions, aided by our intellectual powers, considered as the sources of all our discoveries and inventions which have played so prominent a part in the success of all our enterprises, or whether they are due entirely to the working through man of some external and invisible agency beyond the mind or brain, of the existence of which, however, there is no direct proof. The first view is held by the materialists or agnostics of the present age, while the other is represented by believers in the agency of spirit, which alone, in their opinion, is the ultimate source of all our successes. They say that mere intellectual gifts would not help a man, unless he is spiritually strong also, though he may not acually be aware of his latent spiritual powers. The fact is that spirit and intellect both combine in producing a result, and that intellect cannot work by itself, unless influenced by spirit.

The party holding the first view apparently boasts of the triumphs achieved by man over nature in making certain inventions or discoveries, by the aid of which the powers of nature have been made as if man's slaves, and all this is said to be the outcome of man's brain only, there being no such thing as a help from any external agency like spirit or God. There is also a third party holding an

intermediate belief in the exertions of self as well as in the Grace of God which, in their view, is essential for our exertions bearing fruit. But this phase of thought though held by the majority of people, does not commend itself much. Swami Vivekananda says that it is not true to say that "God helps those who help themselves" but that "God helps those who do *not* help themselves". Either man must be perfectly free from all egotism and must, therefore, surrender the fruits of his actions to God, having an implicit faith in His dispensation, or he must be an egotist depending entirely on his own exertions. But these so-called egotists are, in one sense, believers in the self only. Of course, when they achieve a success in anything, they attribute it to their own exertions, or say to the exertions of their own self, by which is meant the lower self or the ego. According to the *Vedanta*, this lower self or the ego is but a reflection of the *Atman* a true Self, or in other words of the Supreme Self, objectified as the Personal God for those who are believers in the grace of God. Consequently, in depending on his self-exertions or on the powers of his own self for any success, a man does really place his reliance on the true or the Supreme Self only, though unknowingly. I say mere intellectual capacities or powers of brain which is after all a material organisation only cannot help a man in his researches and discoveries, unless acted upon by spirit of which a reflection is ever present and active in him, and which alone is the ultimate source of all knowledge. All relative knowledge is reflected from the *Chit* element of the Absolute Spirit, and if it were not due to that ultimate source of all knowledge ever present in man, nothing could evolve from his brain.

53. As *Vedanta* believes in the existence of one life or one Soul only manifesting itself as men, animals, plants, etc., it does, therefore, utterly discard the theory that plants and animals were made by God to serve as food for man or are intended for his comfort only, and that there is

nothing in common between man and other living beings. This theory has been completely refuted by Hœckel in one of his books. He regards the animals as our own brethren, though lower in the scale of evolution. So does the *Vedanta* also say ; but it further teaches that though metaphysically, we are ever in plants and animals, we have actually been in them empirically, and our actions may take us again to them When we ourselves are in every thing, plants and animals, how can an injury to a living being be permissible in *Vedanta* ? When all that breathes is our own self, every life in whatever form it may be, is sacred to us. Any injury to life means an injury to our own self, at least in the view of a man of Realization. So *Vedanta* places before man the ideal of a universal love, not confined to his own species, but to get an expression for every living being.

54. No doubt all this theoretical teaching of the *Vedanta* can hardly be made applicable to ordinary human life. This is perfectly true, but in placing before man this grand ideal of universal love and self-annihilation without which there can be no universal love in its true sense, the object is to avoid all injury being done to living beings, so far as may be possible and consistent with the preservation of self, by those persons also who choose to stick to the sense of individuality and to adhere to the idea of their separate personalities, trying however to lead a pure and virtuous life. For such people we must have a practical *Vedanta*. The practical *Vedanta* places before us certain ideals that can be put into practice in every day life. It teaches that a man can enjoy all the legitimate pleasures of life, provided he keeps his mind completely free from their effects; *i.e.*, he does not become their slave. Let not the mind, in the least, be effected by those pleasures, or in other words, let there be no attachment of mind to sense objects. This is the grand teaching of the *Gita*. Let the body be at work, but let the mind remain perfectly at rest. Let a man be eating and drinking for the nourishment and preservation

of the body, and not for the sake of pleasures derived. It is the mind that senses pleasure through the senses. So the mind must be kept completely under control, and this can be done only when a man does not seek any pleasure in the sense objects. What is wanted is a true spirit of renunciation, and not any outward show of it, such as wearing rags or living in hovels. There is no good in wearing rags or living in hovels, as long as there is a thirst for begging. One can live in a palace or wear royal apparel with a spirit of utter renunciation.

55. At present the religion of a Hindu is ordinarily contained in following certain formalities, for instance, in sticking to certain caste rules in abstaining from food touched by forbidden hands, in painting his forehead and in attending to the service of his family Gods half-heartedly or hardly with any heart therein, entirely forgetful of the splendid ideals of the past, which distinguish his real religion so pre-eminently from others. All this is *Karma Kanda*, as opposed to *Gnana Kanda*, and *Vedanta* does not entirely discard it, as long as there is an expression of devoutness in it. It does not exclude any phase of thought, but does, on the contrary, include all phases of it, leading a seeker of truth gradually from lower to higher and finally to the highest and the ultimate Truth; and it is for this reason, that the *Vedanta* has been very properly designated as the world-wide religion.

VI.—THE SO-CALLED HINDU IDOLATRY AND POLYTHEISM.

56. The subject of idolatry has been but barely touched in this treatise. The question has been engrossing the attention of eminent writers and thinkers, in India, since the time of Rajah Rama Mohan Roy who was the first vehement Hindu preacher against all image worship. It is the mere superficial view of idolatry that leads people, to a great extent, to speak or write in condemnation of it. The Hindus have been described by alien writers who have visited India, as an idolatrous nation. But whether the Hindus are idolatrous or not, is a question which has never been examined by the opponents of idolatry in an impartial spirit. Like the Hindus, the ancient Greeks, the Romans, and in fact, almost all the Aryan peoples were idolatrous from very early times. Idolatry has two aspects :— (1) Worship of an inanimate object usually called a Fetish, unfashioned, or fashioned in a particular shape, wherein there is no idea of a spirit behind it; and (2) worship of an idol representing a benevolent or a malevolent being, supposed to preside over the destiny of mankind. Decidedly, the Hindu idolatry is never, in any sense, the idolatry of the first kind. Perhaps the old Britons of England were idolatrous in this sense, who are said to have given up their idol worship, as soon as they witnessed their wooden images being consumed by fire, in which they were flung by Christian Missionaries, in order to shew to their worshippers how utterly helpless they were in not being able to rescue themselves from fire or from their enemies. If the Hindus were idolatrous in the above sense, idolatry would have long become extinct among them, considering that enthusiasts and iconoclasts have ever been busy in demolishing their temples and images. On the contrary, idolatry is still flourishing among them, and will certainly flourish in ages

to come. What is the secret of this? Are the hearts of the Hindus really made of blocks of stone or wood like their images, that makes them stick blindly to idolatry, although their eyes have been opened over and over again to the fact that their idols have not been able to save themselves from the blows of iconoclasts? The fact is that the Hindus did never believe, nor do now believe their idols to be their Gods. Let any number of them be destroyed, what do they care, as long as they have their Himalayas and other mountains, to supply material for the fashioning of their idols? They never think that their Gods live in those stone images Every time when an image is worshipped, the Deity whom it represents, is invoked by the repetition of certain *Mantras*; and the ceremony of *prana pratishtha* which takes place at the time of installing a fixed image, serves only to give it the status of the Divinity that is ever behind it, and nothing more. According to the *Vedanta*, *Brahman* or the Absolute is the only Reality. So the Deity that is worshipped is *Brahman* bearing a particular name and form, and an image is but a substitute for that Deity, installed for the sake of worship for want of His personal appearance before the devotee. If one image is destroyed, it can be replaced by another. In fact, they themselves throw away one image to-day, after worshipping it, to be replaced to-morrow by another, newly made. Fools think that in breaking the heathen's image, the heathen's God is crushed. Is it that the Divinity is crushed thereby? Do they not know even this simple thing that the image is the outer form or the substitute only? Men of certain amount of spiritual advancement alone, can grasp the grand ideal of idolatry as is practised by the Hindus, or at least by those who do really practise it in its truest sense. Is it not strange that a Hindu who has himself made an image of clay and water for the sake of worship, thus giving his God a shape, should address it as follows :—

"Thou art neither earth nor water, etc. Thou hast no form, and yet thou assumest various forms to enable Thy devotees to reach Thee, etc, etc."

57. In his "Heroes and Hero worship," Carlyle writes on image worship as follows:— "Idol is *Eidolon* a thing seen. a symbol. It is not God, but a symbol of God, and perhaps one may question whether any the most benighted mortal ever took it for more than a symbol. One may ask, is not all worship whatsoever, a worship by symbols, by *eidola*, a thing seen? Whether *seen*, rendered visible as an image or picture to the bodily eye, or visible only to the inward eye, to the imagination, to the intellect: this makes a superficial but no substantial difference. It is still a Thing Seen, significant of Godhead, an Idol. All creeds, liturgies, religious forms, conceptions that fitly invest religious feelings are in this sense *eidola*, things seen. All worship whatsoever must proceed by symbols, by Idols; we may say all idolatry is comparative, and the worst idolatry is only more idolatrous. Where then lies the evil of it? The poorest mortal worshipping his Fetish while his heart is full of it, may be an object of pity, of contempt and avoidance, if you will, but cannot be an object of hatred. Let his heart be honestly full of it, the whole space of his dark narrow mind illuminated thereby; in one word let him entirely believe in his Fetish, then it is alright for him. Condemnable idolatry is *insincere* idolatry. Souls are no longer filled with their fetish, but only pretend to be filled, and would fain make themselves feel that they are filled."

No better defence can be made of idolatry than what has been written by Carlyle. He is perfectly right when he says that whatever harm there is in idolatry is to be found in the insincerity that is often associated with it. We cannot write without symbols, we cannot speak without symbols, we cannot think without symbols. Can we then pray without symbols, worship without symbols? When such is the case, we ought to do nothing but bless all sincere forms of worship, whatever may be the actual magnitude of the concreteness of their conceptions and their symbols. Here, as elsewhere, sincerity is indeed the test of truthfulness. When we cannot know and comprehend and get

hold of the truth as it is, we have no right to laugh at any kind of human effort to rise from the known to the unknown, from the human to the divine. It may also be stated here that persons sincerely devoted to the worship of their idols, have much more claim to our commendation, than those so-called God worshippers who make a great fuss of their devotion to Him, but want entirely in sincerity. The sensing of the Presence is all a matter of developed consciousness. Those who have not realized God in spirit, verily unto them is only the form.

58. Image worship has two stages :—(1) the lower and (2) the higher.

(1) The lower stage, wherein an image is installed for the purpose of propitiating the Being whom it represents, and whom it is desired to please for the sake of favours sought from Him. This phase of idolatry is introduced among men characterized by a begging spirit. They ask for something valuable from their God, in return of a trivial offering placed before His image. This is not only a begging but rather the most absurd sycophancy. They want as if to bribe their God, in order to induce Him to grant their prayers. In the first place, there should be no begging spirit in the worshippers ; and if there is any, then they should view their God in the light of a Giver only and not that of a Receiver. The illustration of a king who first receives presents before he is induced to grant a prayer is often quoted. But a king after all gives what he receives from his subjects. The Almighty King of kings is not bound by any such limitations He does not stand in need of any propitiation from His devotees. His treasury is inexhaustable; and consequently, His gifts do not require to be recouped by any influx from without. This sort of idolatry is certainly condemnable, and should, therefore, be discouraged.

(2) The higher stage, wherein the image is worshipped purely out of love for the Deity whom it represents. Herein, there is no bargaining. Nothing is asked in return.

A devotee who is filled with the love of his God, becoming desirous for a visual sight of Him, which he cannot obtain as long as he is subject to illusion, the cause of his regarding himself as an individual entity separate from God, resorts to some beautiful representation of Him, in the shape of an image, which he either places before him and adores by all sorts of worship, or pictures in his mind, constantly meditating upon it. The external image helps him a great deal in gradually concentrating his mind upon one object, with the result that the devotee ultimately acquires the power of concentration to a degree wherein the mind is withdrawn from all other thoughts, and there remains nothing for him except the image which is pictured in his mind as if, and thus a time comes when the external image before him also becomes a superfluous object. The incessant meditation upon this mental image of his God, enables the devotee to see the Divine Vision through objectification of his own self which is the Divinity itself, his self being gradually merged into the image which is eventually realized as one with it This is no doubt a very sublime idolatry, and has very marvellous effects, turning the human into the Divine. It is said of Paramahansa Rama Krishna that he at times lost himself so entirely in the love of the Deity, that instead of adorning the image which he worshipped, he decorated his own person with flowers and jewels that were intended for the image.

The idol must be fully expressive of the ideal of worship adopted by the devotee, or else it is certainly an object worship, and not the worship of God whom he wishes to adore. According to the *Vedanta*, as every thing in the world is but a manifestation of God, an image too is an expression of Him, or more correctly speaking, of the Absolute *Brahman* whose Highest Manifestation the Personal God is ; and, therefore, in *Vedanta*, idolatry is not looked upon with any contempt or derision, as long as the worshipper or the adorer fully realizes the meaning of it, or is fully conscious of the fact that in worshipping the image,

he is not paying his reverence to the block of stone or wood composing its body, but really to the Being whom it represents and who is behind it.

59. That idolatry is indeed highly censurable wherein the worship of images is made a source of lucrative income by its promoters The images are exhibited more for drawing forth offerings from their votaries, than for engendering any true devotion within their hearts. Besides, this sort of idolatry partakes more of a mechanical nature, than of any real heart-throbbing. Hardly there is any pulsation of heart, much less a true devotion. The officiating priest goes through all the ceremonies of worship with hardly any heart in it. It is contended that offerings are wanted not for the Deity worshipped, but for the support of the priest presiding over worship. Of course all offerings placed before the Deity, or say before His image, should take the shape of thanksgivings only for the boons received ; and there can be no better utilization of them than their appropriation for the subsistence of the poor and the needy who are living *Narayanas* in human shape as styled by the Swami Vivekananda. Any appropriation of offerings by the greedy priests, serves only as an inducement to more and more demands which are at times very exorbitant, and also encourages the life of a drone, leading to all sorts of vices, of which many instances have already come to light. The priest may, however, be paid for his services by a system of fixed fees, sufficient for his subsistence. Professional idolatry, therefore, which is practised for pecuniary gains only, must be strongly denounced, and it is certainly one of the great evils of the Hindu Society, that has given rise to numerous scandals Priests bent on making money, have hardly any thought for the spiritual welfare of laymen, as their look out is to serve their own interests, squeezing out of the worshippers as much money as they can, in the shape of offerings and presents. In fact, for every religious ceremony, whether it be a *Puja* or *Katha* (recitations of Holy Scriptures), or a

Sraddha, or a marriage feast, or a funeral function, the crafty priests have invented a very complicated ritual, unauthorized by the *Vedas* and *Sastras*, and which involves offerings of money at every step, quite unwarranted by the nature of the function or ceremony; but it must at the same time be honestly confessed here that the laymen have also, in a way, encouraged the priests to resort to all these contrivances, by their withholding payments of priests' legitimate dues for presiding at the ceremony or the function, to the extent necessary for his subsistence, and commensurate with the importance of the ceremony.

The services of a priest are requisitioned only in connection with ceremonies the performance of which is obligatory for every Hindu, as long as he chooses to stick to the *Karma Kanda* of the *Vedas*, and which are meant as a sort of self-discipline and self-culture preparatory to his entering the higher life, wherein his inner spiritual potentialities have to be unfolded through a series of further self-imposed austerities, called *Sadhanas*, or through his devotion to the Personal God. As soon as a Hindu enters the higher life, the necessity of sticking to all forms is done away with, and he can then exercise his will freely as regards the choice of ideals and the way in which he should proceed to the realization of the highest goal. Thus it is entirely left to him whether he should go on conforming to the *Vedic* ritual, and thus be subject to the thraldom of the priest and to the strict disciplinary life imposed by the *Sastras* on every student or house-holder, or be free from all obligation to its observance by living a truly spiritual life that is no longer burdened with any such irksome penances or practices as are binding on him in the earlier stages. But be it noted here that the institution of the *Vedic* ritual, howsoever irksome and vexatious it may be, is no doubt well intentioned, giving as it does a kind of training that does ultimately prove very efficacious to every aspirant in his spiritual unfoldment, in the same way as does a life of strict dis-

cipline imposed on a school boy prove useful in his intellectual development and the progress of his studies.

No doubt this tyranny of the priest has tended to deprive many a highly religious institution of its spirituality, and it has also done a great harm in asmuch as people are losing faith in some of the very essential ceremonies also, which must be performed in strict accordance with the ordinances of the *Vedas* and the *Sastras*, and which are meant for the spiritual welfare of the living as well as of the dead. In my humble opinion, the whole ritual stands in need of a complete revision in the interests of both the laymen and the priests.

60. It cannot be denied that idolatry has been at the bottom of the cultivation of all Fine Arts, such as Music, Painting, Sculpture and even Architecture. In countries where idolatry has been put down by the strong hands of religious preachers or temporal kings, all taste for fine arts has as if been completely crushed. All the existing exquisite specimens of fine arts bear witness to the fact of their designers having been men of sublimity of thought and of grandness of conceptions regarding the Abstract, giving them as if a concrete garb of beauty. Because the Emperor Shah Jahan idolized his Queen, that a beautiful mausoleum like the Taj came into existence, which is still as if a living memento in marble of his devotion to his wife, that must have amounted to idolatry. In fact, an idolatrous man wishes to surround himself by a halo of beauty, in having before his eyes sights that are lovely as well as fully expressive of the worshipper's ideal of love for his God, such as beautiful statues, pictures and edifices that are attractive to the very core, and that cast an enchantment all around, reminding him constantly of the Divine Beauty and Glory which are manifested through all these concrete objects. With all this beautiful panorma before his eyes, when he combines it with sweet strains of music, both vocal and instrumental, that produce vibrations of bliss in the heart, culminating in what is called the ecstatic

state, the devotee forgets himself entirely in the love of his God, losing all idea of self consciousness even, and then this external world as if vanishes for him, there being left one Consciousness only which alone exists in reality. But all these paraphernalia of worship are of no avail where there is no true responding of the heart which is often utterly blank and void of all sincerity in the midst of all this pompous show of devotion

61 The desire of paying worship or reverence, in one shape or the other, to superior beings, whether human or divine, whether living or dead, or whether in person or represented by symbols in the shape of images etc, is almost a human instinct, or say, is innate in man. In religions wherein idolatry is strictly prohibited, most of their followers have succumbed to this instinct, and they also worship concrete objects symbolic of certain ideals of their respective religions The Christians venerate the pictures or relics of their saints or the crucifix, the Parsis pay reverence to fire as an emblem of Divine Glory, the Mohammedans worship the tombs of their saints and the Sikhs hold their *granthas* or Holy books in veneration.

The mission of all the great Prophets was that of destruction of all forms in religion, but they had to contend against the machinations of the priests who wished to stick to rituals that had been stamped with a mark of holiness on account of long usage and custom Thus there have been fights between the priest and the prophet in every country and in every religion. The prophet too in the end, is compelled to prescribe certain forms in order to make his abstract teachings comprehensible by the common people, which forms ultimately develop into a complicated ritual through the artifices and selfishness of the priests. Buddha was the first great Teacher who preached against all rituals and sacrifices, his broad heart and philanthropy having revolted against all rites involving an injury to animal life. The *Vedanta* also discourages both the ritual and the sacrifices, though owing to its conformity with the *Vedas*, does

not actually condemn them. Still it is distinctly laid down by it that *Vedic* rituals and sacrifices can never lead a man to Eternal Bliss, and no injury to animal life is permissible in view of the animal being also a manifestation of the Self.

When the desire of paying reverence or veneration, in one form or the other, to persons or objects is innate in man, then no form of worship should ever be condemned, as long as there is a sincerity in it. As we are human, our efforts to grasp the Absolute or the Abstract which is utterly inconceivable by ordinary human intellects, must necessarily, be thoroughly human, with a human concrete conception only of the Divinity. What is the Personal God after all? He too may be considered as a human being, only that He is immensely magnified, as said by the Swami Vivekananda. Man sees, so does He see, though His vision is unbounded ; man hears, so does He hear, though His power of hearing has no limit. In fact, if cows and lions had any religion, they would conceive of Him as a big Cow or as a big Lion only. Ordinary people cannot transcend the limit of their human intellect ; and therefore, for them the Personal God of human attributes is the highest expression of the absolute Reality. Unless the Absolute is realized in what is called the Supersensuous state, it is nothing more than a verbal bragging for a man to boast of abstract conceptions about God, wherein there is hardly any sincerity.

Consequently, all ye fanatics in all religions ! if ye examine in a scrutinizing spirit, the innermost recesses of your own hearts, ye will meet with shortcomings in your actual realization of the Reality ; and when such is the case, why do ye denounce any form of belief, as long as it is professed with a sincerity in it ? Thoughtless denunciations of any particular belief or beliefs donot serve any end. They do not lead to any uplifting of humanity. It is entirely through awakening of the human intellect by

actual experiences about the Reality that a man makes any real spiritual advancements.

62. Every religion has its theosophy as well as its mythology, the former dealing with the cardinal points of that religion touching the essence and attributes of God, usually designated as mysticism, and the latter illustrating the same points or tenets in allegorical figures or by concrete descriptions, in order to render the theosophy of the religion intelligible to ordinary minds. No religion, howsoever advanced in its tenets, is free from mythology which is more or less developed according as a particular religion is more or less advanced in spirituality In the Old Testment, Jehovah is said to have guided the Israelites in their wanderings from Egypt to Canaan, He Himself having assumed a concrete form to serve as a Guide. Satan is described as visiting God and the prophets relating to mundane affairs Jehovah is said to have appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and He is also described as speaking to the prophets about His having visited certain tribes with His vengeance, who disobeyed the prophets in not giving up idolatry All this is mythology. The Buddhistic religion wherein there is no belief even in a God, is full of mythology, the central figure of which is Buddha himself. The peculiarity is that the more spiritually or mystically advanced a religion is, the higher developed is its mythology. Consequently, the Hindu religion has a very advanced and complicated system of mythology. The monstrous figures of Deities have a symbolical significance, or are expressive of some grand ideals of religion. The four-armed figure of Vishnu or the three-eyed figure of Siva is an allegorical expression only, suggestive either of the power or the attributes of the Deity. For instance, Vishnu being the Sustainer of the world, is given four arms emblematic of His supporting the world on the four points with His four hands. Siva's body is represented as covered with ashes and encircled by serpents. The ashes represent the *Maya* which appears

to cover the *Brahman*, though it has no existence whatsoever in the absolute sense, and therefore, it may be appropriately represented by ashes implying extinction; and the serpent is the sign of eternity or infinity. There is actually no such existence as that of a four-armed Vishnu or a three-eyed Siva, and these figures merely represent the devotees' conception of their particular ideals respecting the Divinity. No doubt there is Vishnu and there is Siva as two different Aspects of the One and the same Deity, varying with His different attributes, and existing in that sense alone in which the *Vedanta* admits of their existence as the two Phases only of the one Supreme Consciousness, as already described under *Trimurti*, and not as two different Beings with bodies, inhabiting particular *Lokas* or worlds. Siva is the Aspect of the Universal Consciousness wherein the element of mind, or say the Cosmic Mind, is not yet developed, being pure *Sat-Chit-Ananda* with *Maya* enveloping it as its body. He is, therefore, considered as wrapt in meditation upon what is called the Absolute Consciousness which is the background of His Personality; and He is, consequently, designated as the Lord of the *Sanyasins* or the monks who have been able to stop all mental activities, contemplating upon Him only as their own self. Vishnu on the other hand, being the Aspect of the Universal Consciousness, with a fully developed Personality which is the aggregate of all the individual personalities in the Universe, He is by virtue of His function as Sustainer of the said individual personalities, the Lord of His devotees who adore Him for the preservation of their self, regarded by them as separate from His Supreme Self though in an empirical sense only. The devotee, however, loves to worship and adore these figures only, regarding them as real and bestowing all sorts of praises on them full of allegorical expressions. To me the Ideal of a Man-God, as presented to us in the persons of the Incarnations, such as Rama, Krishna and Buddha, etc, who actually lived among men and in whom the Divine Glory shone with more or less effulgence and the

Divine Power had its manifestation in a greater or lesser degree, as required on each occassion, for the salvation of mankind, is far more attractive and impressive than any imaginary conception of the Personal God; and consequently, their worship or adoration has much to commend itself to us, in the absence of actual realization of the Divinity within our own hearts.

In spite of the fact that, as stated above, idolatry, in one form or the other, is practised by the majority of followers of almost all the religions in the world, it is a strange irony of fate that the Hindus who have given to the world the most sublime ideas of spirituality and whose conceptions of the Divinity, whether abstract or concrete, are the grandest of all that have ever found an expression in the domain of philosophy and religion, should be as a whole nicknamed by their conquerors, the Muhammadans and the Christians alike, as a heathen and an idolatrous nation. The reason is that in such matters, judgment is often passed on superficial observations of the practices of the common people, which are often very delusive, and which, if taken as representative creeds of the religions of which those people are nominal followers, would certainly lay open every religion, howsoever spiritually advanced it may be, to the charge of idolatry and all sorts of rank superstition. There are people possessed of all the necessary intellectual training who though haters of all idolatry in religion, are however, seen idolizing living persons or adoring beautiful pictures of women in all sorts of postures, often very objectionable from moral as well as spiritual point of view. Verily! theirs is the idolatry far worse than the idolatry of a stone image worshipper, in as much as the former vitiates both the moral and the spiritual taste of man, while the latter has a prejudicial effect on his spirituality only, if it has any. The adorer of the picture is regarded as a godly man, if he is regular in his attendance at the church, while the idolator who worships his idol with a sincerity of heart, is considered as

ungodly. Verily! such as the verdict of our modern ecclesiastics.

63. The controversy over the question whether God is Impersonal or Personal, whether He has a form or is formless, has been raging in India from time immemorial. There was frequently a severe fight over this question between the Swami Vivekananda and his Guru or Teacher, Sri Ramakrishna; and how was the Swami at last prevailed upon to accept his Guru's teaching that God is Impersonal and Personal both, in varying conditions of the devotee's mind, will be gathered from the following extract from the Swami's Biography, published recently, which is condensed here to avoid lengthy quotations, the original words of the Biography being however retained :—

"Indeed, to Sri Ramakrishna Noren (Narendra Nath Datta, the original name of the Swami Vivekananda) was indebted for his entire education in Hinduism ; and often times, it was a question of infinite patience and long suffering on the part of the Master because of his chief disciple often openly rebelling against him. Noren was as if deliberately blind and the Master literally made him see. Noren representing the spirit of Modern India, sat at the feet of his Master to learn the greatness of the Indian Past. All the spiritual unrest and religious tumult and all the doubt and intellectual license of the age, the product of a deep study of the Western philosophy and science, were as if concentrated in Noren before the man of Dakshineswara. He was glad in his heart that Noren was a rebel, for without the intellectual strain and struggle and without the illumination which comes thereof, he instinctively knew that his Narendra would not be able later on to do his work of helping the souls of others by solving their difficulties in the spiritual path and in the understanding and acceptance of Hinduism. Verily ! there was no single Hindu Ideal which Noren did not violently antagonize. Whensoever Sri Ramakrishna would speak of Radha and Krishna in those days, Noren's whole personality would

turn; he thought the whole relationship of the *Avatara* to Radha immoral and objectionable. Did Sri Ramakrishna speak of them, he would leave the room at once. Then he Master interrupting his conversation with the others, would go in pursuit of his disciple, catching him by the arm and entreating him to come and sit down with the words—"Why not fix your mind only on the great and intense yearning of Radha and the Gopis for that which is Supreme? Why dwell on the expression? After all that may appear human to you, but you must take the yearning and the vision as divine." In the end in all struggles with his disciple the Master was triumphant; and on his death bed when too ill to speak, he is said to have made signs as if saying: "Noren now understands everything. He has accepted all. Now he is the son of the Mother, a *Bhakta* of Radha-Krishna a devotee of Sita-Rama, and withal an out-and-out *Advaitin*, a meditator on the Formless *Brahman*." His initiation in the *Advaita Vedanta* too was brought about in subtle ways. He was at first horrified to hear his Master utter the word: '*Sivoham*' i.e. 'I am God'. As a Brahmo, Noren had thought God as one reality and soul as another. To say that these were one and the same was a terrible blasphemy he thought. It was the living experience he had with his Master that convinced him of the truth, with the result that not only he in the end himself realized the Truth in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* but became a great Vedantic Teacher of the present age. In short, the young man who had come to Sri Ramakrishna as Brahmo had been converted into a Hindu. The Master used to say to him:—"My boy! see the truth from all angles and through every perspective. My whole life has been a training in all sidedness. Gain the same consciousness. Be a *Jnani* and a *Bhakta* in one." Such was the wonderful teaching of the Master."

It must be noted here that the same Narendra who is spoken of in the above extract as having once violently antagonized the grand ideal of love between the Gopis and

Sri Krishna, pronouncing it as immoral and objectionable, who was thoroughly coloured in his early life in a deep tint of the teachings of the Western philosophy, specially that of Spencer, which he had also criticised, a criticism that was even accepted by the great thinker as a mark of his great intellectual capacity, and who had later on imbibed the doctrines of the Brahmo Samaj, subversive of all Hindu Ideals representing the various conceptions of the Divinity, was in his still later life as Swami Vivekananda, so fully conscious of that grand ideal of love, in spite of his strict Vedantic teachings, that he spoke about it in one of his addresses in India somewhat in the following strain .—

"We who are immersed in the affairs of the world, can hardly realize the immensity of the Gopis' love for Sri Krishna, until we ourselves get intoxicated by the wine of His Divine Love. Love was their very life, their very faith, which needed nothing else and which did not care even for the heavenly bliss. They regarded Sri Krishna as Personification of Infinite Love. This lofty ideal of love was for the first time revealed to the world by God through His greatest Incarnation as Sri Krishna, which put an end for ever the religion of fear and terror. It was in fact an ideal grander even than that preached by Him in the Gita." The highest expression of this ideal of Divine Love is that wherein all ties that bind a lover to the world, say to mother or father, husband or wife, son or daughter etc., are completely broken. This was the secret of Radha's love and this was also the grand ideal of Miran Bai's love for Sri Krishna.

64. The Hindus are nicknamed not only as idolators, but also as polytheists, in fact, believers in the existence of 330 millions of Gods. What a terrible number! A man can hardly endure the supremacy of a single master. Here we have no less than 33 crores of gods, obedience to whose authority is enjoined for every Hindu. But are Hindus really polytheists? Is their religion a polytheism in

the same sense as was the religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans ? We find an answer to this question in the Swami Vivekananda's Biography from which we beg leave to quote again, as nothing more reasonable and conclusive can be written on the subject. The reasoning is as follows :—

"The Hindu conceives of Truth in the categories of the Real and the Unreal. Thus something may exist, being, however, at the same time unreal in the highest understanding of Reality. Whatever is relatively real is of the essence of *Brahman* which is the only Reality. With this as the background, the mind immediately recognizes the synthesis of Hinduism. Polytheism, Monotheism and Monism all are one in the vision of the Highest. The so-called Gods are Personal Forms or aspects of *Brahman*, and because *Brahman* is real, even so they are real, though apparently or relatively only. Sometimes *Brahman* is conceived of as the Divine Father, or the Divine Mother, or as the Preserver or as the Destroyer or as the Creator or as the Divine Incarnation. Thus every God in Hinduism represents aspects and symbols of the One Eternal Reality. Underlying the apparent polytheism is a great monotheism, and ultimately a spiritual monism. After all, all these seemingly different Deities are one, because they are manifestations of the One and the Same Reality. So there is ultimately, even only One Personal God. All the Gods are One Person in that they have the same Divine Consciousness and because all are *Brahman* in essence. And monotheism itself becomes a spiritual monism, for eventually the individual soul finds that its own reality is the same as that of the God worshipped. Whom then to worship ?—asks the Hindu. He says that the worshipper and the worshipped and the Ideals of worship, *i.e.*, all the Gods and all the souls are One. Therefore, in India, polytheism is the highest monism in essence. All external Forms of Divinity are superimpositions by the inner divinity of the soul upon the special vision it entertains at any given time. Ultimately all superimpositions die out as

the soul advances spiritually. All the Gods merge into their true nature, the One and Indivisible. Only *Brahman*, the only Reality remains. And the Gods are *Brahman*, and the souls are *Brahman*. Verily! the Universe is *Brahman*."

In chapter II of this treatise a number of Sanskrit verses have been quoted from the *Puranas* and the *Stotras* shewing that in spite of their apparent polytheism, Hindus are strict monotheists, nay strict Unitarians or what is now called strict Monists. That in making their offerings even to the *Devas*, the so-called Gods, and the *Pitris* (manes of the ancestors), the Hindus really offer them to the same One Being, is gathered from the following translation of a Sanskrit Sloka :—

"The *Yogins* meditate upon Thee only, while those that are engaged in sacrifices make their offerings to Thee alone. Thou art the only One Being who assuming the forms of the *Devas* and the *Pitris*, is the Receiver of the *Havya* and *Kavya* offerings (technical terms for offerings made to the *Devas* and the *Pitris i.e.*, ancestors.)"

65. Every institution has both its bright and dark side. It is the case with idolatry, it is the case with polytheism, and it is also the case with pilgrimage to holy places. No doubt, pilgrimage was a good institution in ancient times, as it enabled people separated by long distances to interchange thought with one another at such gatherings. But now when the object is easily gained by means of publications and the public press, there is hardly any need of such immense gatherings at one place, and no good can be derived from them; on the contrary, they may aggravate the evil by giving rise to scandals or by causing the spread of epidemics, endangering human life. I do not know how can any promiscuous intermixture of the sexes at public gatherings, be defended, consistent with the lofty ideals of wifehood and widowhood, inculcated by the Hindu Religion, wherein a chaste wife or widow is forbidden to approach so near a stranger as to allow his shadow to fall on her.

VII.—APPEAL FOR RELIGIOUS HARMONY AND CONCORD.

66. I now conclude this work with the same prayer as is embodied in the Swami Vivekananda's Biography and which is as follows :—

"We may reasonably hope and pray that all the various sects inhabiting India, Hindus, Brahmos, Aryas, Sikhs etc., in their sincere longing for a greater To-morrow, will ultimately combine in throwing off all warring differences in name and method, and threading through the mazes of the present come into the rich fulfilment of the future with an accomplished realization as to the full meaning and the full potentialities of the One Imperishable Spirit of Hinduism, whether past, present or future."

67. So, ye *Sanatana Dharmis* (orthodox Hindus), *Arya Samajists*, Brahmos and others ! why do ye fight and wrangle on mere names and forms which are not essentials of a religion ? If *Nirakara* or Formless God is the Ultimate or the Absolute Truth, the *Sakara* or God with a Form, is the lower or the relative truth; but be it noted here that a *Nirakara* or Formless Being must also at the same time be *Nirguna* or attributeless, as an Impersonal Being can never be associated with attributes, for the reason that it is the superimposition of these attributes only on an Impersonal Being that converts an essentially Impersonal God into a God with Personality. All abstract conceptions of God with attributes are illogical. If God is Benevolent, then it is essential that He must have a heart for the expression of His Benevolence ; and in *Vedanta*, the aggregate of all individual hearts is the Cosmic Heart. The essence of all the teachings of the *Vedanta* is to see Unity in all this diversity ; and therefore, taking all these diverse phases of thought found in the world as relatively true, which must exist as long as the Ultimate Unity is not realized, all your efforts should be directed towards the discovery of a

common basis on which we can all work with perfect harmony and agreement for the common good of the motherland, forgetting for the time being all your differences on minor points. That common ground is furnished by the *Vedanta* ; and therefore, if ye all respond to its message of universal toleration and concord, then there is every reason to hope that the day is not far when all these discordant elements, found at present in your midst, will become a thing of the past.

68. And not only should the various sects of the Hindus make an effort to work harmoniously and peacefully in conjunction with one another, but that the Hindus and the Mohammadans should also make up their differences, and try to work together on this common platform, so well furnished by the *Vedanta*, for the good of their common country Says the Swami Vivekananda in one of his letters addressed to a Mohammadan gentleman :—

"The truth is that *Advaitism* is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love Practical *Advaitism* looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul. My experience is that if ever the followers of any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable degree in the plane of practical work-a-day life, it is those of Islam and Islam alone. Therefore, we are firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of *Vedantism*, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. For our own motherland, a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—*Vedanta* brain and Islam body-is the only hope. Let my motherland manifest for her good the twofold ideal of an Islamic body and a *Vedantic* heart."

Verily ! all the various nationalities inhabiting this country, whether original settlers or those who have adopted it as their motherland, *i.e.*, Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Parsis, Buddhists etc., should unite together on this platform, and work for their common good, advancing the

material prosperity of their country as well as furthering the religious harmony among them, the disturbance of which is sometimes a very sad cause of the breach of public peace and tranquillity, so essential for the material and spiritual progress of the country.

69. But if ye are unable to make up your differences in matters of religion, and work harmoniously for the common good of your country on this common platform furnished by the *Vedanta*, for the reason that the *Vedanta* preaches the doctrine of the *Bhakti Marga* also, wherein not only the belief in the existence of the Personal God having various forms, in accordance with His attributes, has been admitted, though in a relative sense only, and not in any absolute sense, but Divine Personalities like Rama, Krishna, Buddha etc., have been freely accepted as Historical Personages, and regarded as fit to be worshipped and adored as God Himself; and if ye also cannot come to agreement on the ground of a belief in the absolute Reality forming the background of the universe as well as of God, no matter under whatever name or in whatever form, He is worshipped, a belief that is preached as the highest and the Ultimate Truth by the *Vedanta*, then why not renounce all adherence to religions wherein the doctrine of the existence of the Personal God is admitted ? Instead of fighting and shedding blood in the name of a God whose absolute existence is not proved, or is even denied, would it not be desirable for the cultivation of harmony among you, if all of ye make up your mind to welcome back the noble teachings of the Lord Buddha who never went into the question whether the soul or God existed or not, and who contented Himself with the preaching of universal harmony and love among all living beings, and with the inculcating of the doctrine of charity, benevolence and the like good qualities that appeal to the heart only ? If the *Vedanta* which though intrinsically atheistic in view of its maintaining the belief in the absolute existence of the One Reality only discarding thereby the doctrine of the Personal God,

also holds out the Ideal of a Personal God to those who wish to cherish it for the sake of His worship and adoration, and which also preaches universal love and toleration in view of its belief in one Self only manifesting itself through all living beings, fails to give consolation to all of ye bellegerent factions, so hotly engaged in controversies about God, and if any particular theistic religion or religions cannot satisfy ye, then perhaps the re-introduction of an atheistic religion like Buddhism (I mean the pure religion of Gautama Buddha and not that practised by the so-called Buddhists) is the only solution of the difficulty, a religion that preaches such a noble doctrine as that of universal love and toleration.

70. When it is proved that the Personal God exists only relatively to the mind of the devotee who wishes to adore Him, there can be no harm apparently in worshipping Him under any name or in any form most dear to him, be it that of Rama, Krishna, Kali or any other; and it is sheer fanaticism to fight over names and forms. Real fanaticism lies in saying: Hinduism, Aryaism, Brahmoism, Christianity or Mohammadanism is the only true religion, and all the rest are false. If anything about the truth of religions is to be said, then better say: Vedantism is the only true religion, all else are its various stages for the expression of the one and the same truth, called, consequently, the Ultimate Truth.

If any particular phase of thought or creed is not agreeable to you, or does not appeal to your reason, never mind, do not hold any belief in it, but why raise a controversy over it that may wound the feelings of others who are sincere believers in it? No two minds ever agree perfectly on any point; and difference of opinion, therefore, must prevail whether the point under discussion be religious, social or political, as long as the Absolute Unity preached by the *Vedanta* is not realized.

No doubt all hypocricy and abuses must be rooted out from religion, but in our efforts to cut the offshoots

and branches which are the later growth, we should not lay the axe to the root of the tree itself.

Therefore, destroy not, but construct as said by the Swami Vivekananda ; and if you cannot do that, then better stand apart, and be a silent spectator of what is going on in its natural course in the world. Faddists and fanatics never do any good to the society, but on the contrary, in their zeal for reform very often miss the mark, spoiling the very thing which they seek to improve.

FINIS

Om Santi, Santi, Peace to All.

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APPENDIX.

Sanskrit slokas from the various Puranas and Stotras.

(*See page* 28.)

ओं नमो वासुदेवाय तस्मै भगवतेसदा ।
व्यतिरिक्तं नयस्यास्ति व्यतिरिक्तोखिलस्य यः ॥ १ ॥
मय्यन्यत्र तथाशेष भूतेषु भुवनेषुच ।
तवेव व्याप्तिरैवर्य गुणतंसूचिकामयी ॥ २ ॥
नमस्तस्मै नमस्तस्मै नमस्तस्मै महात्मने ।
नामरूपं नयस्यैतो योऽस्तितेनोपलभ्यते ॥ ३ ॥
ओं नमोऽस्तु विष्णवेतुभ्यं नमस्तस्मै पुनःपुनः ।
यत्र सर्वं यतः सर्वं यः सर्वं सर्व संश्रयः ॥ ४ ॥
परात्मानमेकं जगद्बीजमाद्यं निरीहं निराकारमोङ्कारवेद्यं ।
यतो जायतेपालयतेयेनविश्वं तमोऽं भजेऽहंयतेयत्र विश्वम् ॥५॥
त्वं ब्रह्मा सृष्टिकर्त्ताच त्वं विष्णुः परिपालकः ।
त्वं शिवः शिवदोऽनंतः सर्व संहारकारकः ॥ ६ ॥
नानारूप विधारी त्वं भक्तानां ध्यानहेतवे ।
येषुरूपेषु यःप्रीतिस्तत्तद्रूपं बिभर्षिच ॥ ७ ॥